Kalidasa's Women Characters as Role Models of Women's Empowerment

Edited by

P Geetha

Centre for Women's Studies
Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth
New Delhi - 110016
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Published by
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Printed at Ganesh Printing Press, New Delhi

Price : Rs. 65/-

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FOREWORD

Prof. Vachaspati Upadhyaya
Vice- Chancellor
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New Delhi

It is with a sense of appreciation that I welcome the maiden publication from the Centre for Women's Studies, which is in its infancy in the Vidyapeeth. The book "Kalidasa's Women Characters as Role Models of Women's Empowerment' is a laudable attempt to present the women characters of Kalidasa from a modern perspective of women's empowerment.

Kalidasa's plays are neither historical nor mythological but very imaginative and poetical. He took elements from great epics *Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Puranas* and vedic texts and created memorable characters representing his own ideals and views and the society of his age. Women in Kalidasa's plays are very finely drawn. Kalidasa is a multifaceted literary figure and there are several dimensions to his genius. Everytime we read his works, a new perspective emerges. The Centre for Women's Studies has taken up the task of analysing the women characters of Kalidasa from different angles. It had organised one seminar on the study of women characters of Kalidasa as role models of women's empowerment. This type of analysis will give a clear picture of the socio-cultural status of the women in Kalidasa's age. The articles in this volume testify to the fact that Kalidasa's women characters yield to different kinds of interpretation and it is interesting and rewarding to explore their significances. The scholars have successfully studied each word and action of various characters carefully.

Leafing through the pages of this book, one comes to know about women who were real assets of the nation. Wives devoted to their

husbands and mothers of heroic sons command our respect. That was an age when duties were more emphasized than rights. But in these valuable articles the in-built strength of women in their various forms is highlighted. Shakuntala, Urvasi, Sita are ideals of Indian womanhood worth emulating.

I congratulate the Centre for Women's Studies for bringing out this publication. In my perception, endeavours like this pave way for better understanding of our classical Sanskrit texts. I hope the Centre will take up many more studies relevant to societal needs especially in the area of women empowerment.

Prof. Vachaspati Upadhyaya

INTRODUCTION

" Kalidasa's Women Characters as Role Models of Women's Empowerment" is a collection of papers presented at a conference on this interesting theme, organised by the Centre for Women's Studies of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi in March, 2007. The Centre from its very inception is pursuing the study of Vedic texts and ancient Sanskrit classics from a Women's Studies perspective and the present volume is the result of one such endeavour.

Kalidasa's classics have been read with great literary appreciation, widely commented upon and analysed threadbare. A classic by its very definition refers to its relevance to all ages. The dramas of Kalidasa like the plays of Shakespeare have universal significance, proving to be relevant to all times, appealing to future generations of readers in different cultural contexts.

The memorable women characters Kalidasa has created, are true representations of different facets of Indian womanhood. A closer look at important women characters in the plays of Kalidasa reveals qualities which go beyond conventional beauty and traditional feminine passivity. Kalidasa presents women from all strata of society - queens, concubines, maids-in-waiting, ascetics. Kalidasa's heroines, mother-figures and supporting minor characters are in their own capacity embodiments of women's empowerment.

"Empowerment" is a term widely used in the context of women's development. It is a state of mind and attitude of a person. Kalidasa's Shakunthala, Urvasi, Uma and Sita are all empowered women in this sense. They exhibited great ability to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by the customs and beliefs and practices. Kalidasa's Shakunthala, Uma and Sita represent ideals of Indian womanhood.

Kalidasa considered woman as the power incarnate - the strength that makes man act in the right way and direction. Dharini rules with love and justice. She is the saviour of the King. Urvasi is well educated,

cultured and refined Courtesan.

Shakunthala and Sita are not the suffering victims- in other words"abalas". Suffering is the challenging test to try the worth of men and women in life. If men face crisis in life with physical strength and power, women like Shakunthala and Sita overcome challenging circumstances, empowered with inner strength. Empowerment varies by context and condition. Romila Thapar finds Shakunthala of Mahabharatha a liberated woman demanding to be justly treated, but Kalidasa's Shakunthala degraded to a silent sufferer. But in the patiently suffering Shakunthala of Kalidasa also, we find an empowered woman who is proud of her self identity and is patiently waiting for a recognition of her virtues. Her empowerment lies in facing and overcoming oppressive environment. Sita is also full of confidence and believes that she was banished not by her husband but by the ideal king. Even as she remains passive, humble and kind, she never gives up her self respect and dignity and reminds Rama, the King about his duty to Sita as a subject, if not as wedded wife.

Apart from these major characters, Anasuya, Priyamvada and Citralekha are all paragons of empowerment in fostering decision making and timely action. Bakulavalika is known for her quick repartee, resourcefulness and cleverness. Citralekha is a good counsellor to Urvasi. Priyamvada and Anasuya interfere at the right moment on behalf of the love-lorn Shakunthala and are quick to get some remedy for the curse of Durvasa revoked. Anasuya also gives practical suggestions when Shakunthala is rejected by her husband.

There are 14 articles on this theme collected in this book. Hindi section contains six articles. Acharya Suryadevi Chathurvedi in her article establishes that the exmple set forth by Kalidasa's Shakuntala, Priyamvada, Gautami through their chaste, calm and clever management of the situation at the event of Dushyanta's disrespect towards woman, will serve as a good solution to today's problems of violence against women. Dr. Bhagirathi Nanda in his paper sees empowerment in the social responsibility shown by Kalidasa's women . Prof. Hari Dutt

Sharma traces the strength and empowerment needed for the modern-day women, in Kalidas's heroines. He has identified Sita, Parvati and Shakuntala with their courage, confidence and stability as role models for the present generation. Prof. Prabhunath Dwedi presents empowerment routed in traditional values where expression of free will is emphasised and not despotism.Dr. Rajani Joshi focuses her attention on two plays *Malavigagnimitram* and *Vikramorvasium*. Heroines of these plays are well-educated, and skillfully trained. They are well versed in building relationship and in management skills .

There are six articles in English. Dr. Anvita Sharma gives ample evidences to project Kalidasa's heroines' decision making skill,and patient forbearance. Ms. Sundari Siddharth holds up Priyamvada, with all her innovative spirit and timely action as a role model. Prof.Padma Sreenivasan's article also dwells on the minor women characters as empowered women. Prof. Amita Sharma after touching upon the empowerment of the heroines, gives an overview of the modern writings where the authors have rewritten the classic to suit the twentieth century gaining inspiration from Kalidasa's characters. Prof. A.K. Singh in his paper declares that Kalidas' characters are not the means of knowing women in that age. Women in hermitage exhibit good managerial skills like mutual co-operation. Shakunthala is considered more trustworthy and able-in-charge. He gives full credit to Kalidasa for making his women characters realize their potential. Dr. Sujata explores empowerment in different facets of womanhood. Dr. Kamala Pandey has contributed her paper in Sanskrit.

Thus the book is an attempt at description, analysis and evaluation of woman's character and woman's position in Indian society. This simple voyage of discovery helps the modern readers to understand Indian womanhood in all perspectives and provides role models to emulate. The articles highlight the underlying inner strength at the centre of empowerment. They also point out the simple truth as Ratnamayidevi Dikshit has remarked in her book "Women in Sanskrit Plays " :

Kalidasa wrote with a purpose, and every character he portrayed and every incident he represented, had a message to convey, the main purpose being, to tell the woman what she was, and to remind the man that he should not trespass on the rights of his counter-part.

Kalidasa's women characters are the empowered lot and deserve our respect, love, reverence and wonder.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the inspiration and motivation behind this effort the encouragement given by our Honourable Vice Chancellor, Prof. Vachaspati Upadhyaya. We are grateful to the Ministry of Human Resources for the generous financial support which made this book a reality.

P. Geetha

कालिदास के नारीपात्रों की सामाजिक समर्थता

डा. भागीरथि नन्द

प्रत्येक युग में साहित्य मुख्य विषय वस्तु की वर्णना के साथ समाज का चित्र प्रस्तुत करता है। मुख्य विषय के द्वारा समर्थ साहित्यकार उसी युग को तथा परवर्ती युग को भी उपदेश देता है। साहित्यकार समाज से ग्रहण करते हुए समाज को बहुत कुछ दान करता है। साहित्य केवल तथाकथित नारी–पुरूषों के रसात्मक वर्णन से मनोविनोद नहीं करता बल्कि सभी शास्त्रों का आकलन करते हुए व्यक्तियों को सुमार्ग पर चलने का एक सर्वाङ्.गीकार्य सिद्धान्त प्रस्तुत करता है। साहित्य चाहे किसी भी भाषा का हो उस की ग्राह्यता के आधार पर वह विश्वजनीन बन जाता है।

समाज में कालानुरोध से कुछ परिवर्तन, कुछ विकृतियाँ, कुछ पारस्परिक वैषम्य भी आ जाते हैं। अतः शिक्षित समाज में व्यवस्था बनाये रखने की आवश्यकता होती है। इस प्रकार के परिवेश में परस्पर सन्तुलन के लिए पारम्परिक पुरातन साहित्य में वर्णित चित्रों की सहायता लेना अवश्यम्भावी हो जाता है।

समाज संरचना के दो स्तम्भ नारी–पुरूष के सम्बन्ध, कर्तव्य, समरसता इत्यादि बिन्दुओं को लेकर कुछ विसंड्.तियां अनुमित होती हैं और शीतल विवाद भी उन–उन स्थलों पर प्रतीत होता है। विसंगति के लिए उस उस परिवेश का कुछ भी कारण हो सकता है, परन्तु विसंगति से मुक्ति सभी की काम्य है। इस के लिए कदाचित् पारम्परिक साहित्य अनुसरणीय है जिससे अतीत– वर्तमान का सम्बन्ध बनाया जा सके। अतः महाकवि कालिदास की दृष्टि में नारी–पुरूष सम्बन्ध, नारीस्वरूप की महनीयता,उत्तरदायित्व, कर्तव्यप्रवणता इत्यादि बिन्दुओं पर प्रकाश डालना प्रासंगिक है।

कालिदास साहित्य में नारी की महनीय छवि आदर तथा उत्कर्ष के साथ प्रतिपादित हुई है। कुछ लोग कालिदास को श्रृंगारी कवि के रूप में मानते हुए उनके प्रणयसम्बन्ध में खुलापन से दोष की आशंका करते हैं किन्तु जहाँ तक प्रणयसम्बन्ध का प्रसंग है वह अगर केवल प्रणयी–प्रणयिनी में सीमित रहकर कवि के स्वानुभव से उन्मुक्त होकर आस्वाद्य होता है तो वह दोष नहीं गुण कहलाता है क्योंकि नारी का अपने प्रणयी के लिए प्रणयिनीत्व सम्बन्ध है, दूसरों के लिए कभी भी नहीं। नारी की मनुष्य समाज में कई भूमिकाएं हैं जैसे कन्या, भगिनी, जाया, जननी इत्यादि। वैसे पुरूष द्वारा भी प्रत्येक भूमिका का सफल निर्वाह और उस का समुचित उपयोग नारी को महनीय बनाते हैं।

नारी की अन्यतम भूमिका है जननी। पतिकुल की रक्षा हेतु योग्य सन्तान उत्पन्न करने के लिए वह पति के प्रयास के साथ भी तत्पर रहती है। जैसे रघुवंध में सन्तान प्राप्ति हेतु वशिष्ठ के आदेश से पति दिलीप के साथ पत्नी सुदक्षिणा सुरभि की सेवा और सुरक्षा के लिए समर्पित रहती है और अन्ततः रघु जैसे प्रतापी पुत्र को पतिकुल रक्षा के लिए गर्भ में धारण करती है। वहाँ रघुवंश के द्वितीय सर्ग में कालिदास नारी की भूमिका को स्पष्ट रेखांकित करते हुए कहते हैं –

'नरपतिकुलभूत्यै गर्भमाधत्त राज्ञी'

(2–75)

यहाँ राज्ञी के गर्भधारण के कारणों में से यहाँ **'नरपतिकुलभूत्यै'** कारण कहा गया है वह वस्तुतः नारी की शक्ति है । वहीं रघुवंश के अष्टम सर्ग में अज विलाप में इन्दुमति के आकस्मिक वियोग से अज के मुख से कालिदास जीवन में नारी की अनिवार्य उपस्थिति को उल्लिखित करते हैं –

''गृहिणी सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ''

(8–67)

अर्थात नारी गृहिणी, सञ्चालिका, सहायिका और शिष्या भी होती

है। ये सारी भूमिकाएँ पति के लिए तो होती ही हैं दूसरों के लिए भी वांछित हैं। इसका उल्लेख कालिदास शाकुन्तलम् में चतुर्थ अंक में शकुन्तला के प्रति कण्व के उपदेश में करते हैं–

शुश्रूषस्य गुरून् .... कुलस्याध्यः।

(शा.4–1 7)

रघुवंश में कालिदास नारी को राजा के स्थान पर मुख्य प्रजापालक प्रशासक के रूप में रखते हैं। जैसे रघुवंश के अन्तिम राजा अग्निवर्ण का व्यसनों के कारण अकाल निधन हो जाने से उन की रानी सिंहासन अभिषिक्त होकर प्रजापालन करती है। यहां कालिदास नारी की प्रशासकता को दर्शाते हैं। उनके शब्दों में –

तं भावार्थं प्रसवसमयाकांक्षिणीनां प्रजाना–
मन्तर्गूढं क्षितिरिव नभोबीजमुष्टिं दधाना।
मौलैः सार्धं स्थविरसचिवैर्हेमसिंहासनस्था
राज्ञी राज्यं विधिवदशिषद्भर्तुरव्याहताज्ञा।।

(1 9–57)

यहां कालिदास नारी में विकसित राजत्व की पुष्टि करते हैं।

परिवार में नारी का परामर्श पुरूष के लिए अनिवार्य माना गया है। कालिदास कुमारसम्भव में इस को स्पष्ट रूप से उल्लिखित करतें हैं। नारद शिव विवाह प्रस्ताव लेकर पार्वती के पिता हिमालय के पास पहुँचते हैं और इस विषय में उनकी सम्मति की कामना करते हैं।

रघुवंश के चतुर्दश अध्याय के

''वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य।।

(रघु.1 4/61)

इस पद्य में सीता के द्वारा प्रयुक्त 'स राजां' शब्द से कई व्यंग्यार्थ प्रतीत होते हैं। इन में से मेरे विचार से इस वातावरण में दो अर्थ प्रासंगिक लगते हैं। एक है– एक पत्नी द्वारा पति की अनुचित निष्पति का विरोध।

दूसरा – सीता के रूप में एक प्रजा का इस प्रकार के राजनिर्णय के प्रति असन्तोष। एक नारी के मुख से इस प्रकार की दृढ़ बात आदि कवि वाल्मीकि भी नहीं बता पाये हैं। कालिदास नारी चरित्रों में सामाजिक आकांक्षा के अनुरूप सामर्थ्य का वर्णन करते हैं।

इस प्रस्ताव पर हिमालय सम्मति होने के बावजूद भी वह अपनी पत्नी की ओर देख उनकी सम्मति चाहते हैं। हिमालय के स्वयं सम्मति के लिए समर्थ होने पर भी पत्नी के विचार की कामना करना द्वैत समाज की ओर इंगित करता है। परिवार में मुख्य निर्णयों पर पति–पत्नी उभय का विचार साम्य अपेक्षित है और गृहिणी का मन्तव्य भी अपेक्षित है क्योंकि पत्नी सहधर्मिणी तो है ही सहकर्मिणी भी है। जैसे –

शैलः सम्पूर्णकामोऽपि मेनामुखमुदैक्षत।
प्रायेण गृहिणीनेत्राः कन्यार्थेषु कुटुम्बिनः।।
मेने मेनापि तत्सर्वं पत्युः कार्यमभीप्सितम्।
भवन्त्यव्यभिचारिण्यो भर्तृरिष्टे पतिव्रताः।।

(कु.6–85,86)

इतना हो जाने पर भी मातृत्व का वात्सल्य कालिदास सिंहावलोकन से वर्णित करते हैं, मातहृदय की कोमलता को भी बड़े चातुर्य से उपदिष्ट करते हैं। जैसे शिव के सम्बन्ध में मेना सबकुछ जानती हैं और इस प्रस्ताव की पृष्ठभूमि में सभी देवताओं के होने से इस की अलभ्यता को समझती है। फिर भी कन्या के भावी सौख्य और अपने से विरह की सम्भावना से शंकित हो जाती है। उदाहरण जैसे –

तन्मातरं चाश्रुमुखीं दुहितृस्नेहविक्लवाम्।
वरस्यानन्यपूर्वस्य विशोकामकरोदगुणैः।।

(कु. 6–92)

इस प्रकार कुमारसंभव में और भी बहुत सारे उदाहरण हैं। मेघदूत में तो कालिदास पत्नी को पति की द्वितीय आत्मा कहते हैं। '**तां जानीथः परिमितकथां जीवितं मे द्वितीयम्** (मे–3–23) समाज के लिए नारी की

अनिवार्यता का यह एक सशक्त उदाहरण है।

अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्, विक्रमोर्वशीयम् नाटकों की शुरूआत ही नारी मान रक्षा से ही हुई है। विक्रमोर्वशीयम् में उर्वशी की राक्षस से सुरक्षा, शाकुन्तलम् में वैतालिक के गीत में (नैतच्चित्रं यदयमुदधि ...) नारी सम्मान की रक्षा राजा का कर्तव्य है, ऐसा बतलाया गया है।

कालिदास की कृतियों में शाकुन्तलम् ही नारी सम्बन्धीवर्णन अधिक प्रस्तुत करता है। इस में माता का उत्तरदायित्व, सखीओं का कर्तव्य, नारी के प्रति पुरूष की दृष्टि, नारी स्वरूप इत्यादि का सुस्पष्ट वर्णन मिलता है।

1. प्रथम अंक में अनसूया के मुख से दुष्यन्त विश्वामित्र,मेनका के प्रणय के प्रसंग को सुनते हैं। जब लज्जात्मक प्रसंग आता है जैसे – **ततो वसन्तोदासमये तस्या उन्मादयितृरूपं प्रेक्ष्यः ..... (इत्यर्धोन्ते लज्जया विरमति)** तब राजा कहते हैं **'परस्ताज्ज्ञात एव'**। कालिदास यहाँ नारी को अनावश्यक लज्जा देने से बचाते हुए उस के स्वतन्त्र सम्मान को अंकित करते हैं। (शा.1)

2. नारी के सामने पुरूष के प्रणय को गुप्त बनाते हुए कालिदास दुष्यन्त के विवाह सम्बन्धी इच्छा को एकान्त में भी नागरिक वृत्ति से उठाते हैं – जैसे – **वैखानसं ..... निषेवितव्यम्।** (1–25)

यहाँ नारी सत्ता को अक्षुण्ण रखा गया है। तथापि इस प्रसंग के व्यंग्य को समझती हुई शकुन्तला राजा से आलापरत प्रियंवदा को मानों रोष से डाँटती है – **इत्मामसम्बद्ध .... आर्यायै गौतम्यै निवेदयिष्यामि।** अर्थात् आश्रम में भी नारी की सत्ता स्वतन्त्र थी और माता का सम्मान उस को मिलता था। अभिभावक के रूप में पारस्परिक सौमनस्य बनाने की सामर्थ्य उसमें थी।

योग्य वर को प्राप्त नारी समाज में अभिनन्दनीया होती है। वह माता पिता के आदर का पात्र भी बनती है। जैसे शाकुन्तलम् में पिता कण्व कहते हैं **''वत्से! सुशिष्यपरिदत्ता विद्येवाशोचनीया संवृत्ता''** (चतुर्थ अंक) – यहाँ आदर तथा अभिनन्दन के साथ कालिदास क्वचित् व्यंग्यार्थ के

रूप में प्रकाशित करा देना चाहते हैं कि नारी का समाज के प्रति असीम उत्तरदायित्व होता है और वह अन्तर्वाहिनी पुरूष शक्ति है जैसे अशोचनीय विद्या सुशिष्य में अन्तः शक्ति है।

ऋषि के आश्रम में नारियों का स्वतन्त्र सम्मान था। शिष्याओं को कन्या के रूप में देखा जाता था। आश्रम में शिष्य और शिष्या भाई–बहन की तरह रहते थे। कण्व इस बात को शकुन्तला के पतिगृहगमन के समय शिष्य से कहते हैं – **भगिन्यास्ते मार्गमादेशय**। यहाँ कालिदासआश्रम में भी नारी को एक पारिवारिक परिचय देते हैं ताकि संबंधान्तर की परिकल्पना न की जा सके और एक समान समाज का सिद्धान्त स्वीकार्य हो।

शाकुन्तलम् के तृतीय अंक में शकुन्तला को लताकुञ्ज में रोकने वाले राजा से शकुन्तला कहती है – **''पौरव! रक्ष विनयम्। मदनसन्तप्ताऽपि न खल्वात्मनः प्रभवामि।''** यहाँ प्रणसम्बन्ध होने पर भी नारी की अपनी मर्यादा के प्रति दृढ़ता दिखायी गयी है। अन्यथा समाजमूल्य का पतन स्वाभाविक है।

कालिदास की दृष्टि में, नारी चरित्र में समाज और परिवार में पारस्परिक सामञ्जस्य तथा आवश्यकतानुसार समुचित उपदेश के लिए सामर्थ्य होना चाहिए। यही उन्होनें दिखाया भी है।

जैसे दुष्यन्त के दरबार में दुष्यन्त–शकुन्तला उभय की उपस्थिति में उनके द्वारा गान्धर्व– विवाह संबंधी की गयी त्रुटि को रेखांकित करती हुई प्रकारान्तर से परस्पर को स्वीकार करने का उपदेश देकर गौतमी एक मातृस्थानीय अभिभावक की भूमिका को सही रूप में निभाती है।
गौतमी कहती है –

नापेक्षितो गुरूजनोऽनया त्वया पृष्टो न बन्धुजनः।
एकैकमेव चरिते भणामि किमेकमेकस्य।।

(शाकु. 5–16)

यहाँ नारी को कालिदास ने उभय स्त्री–पुरूष के समाज का ग्राह्य श्रोतव्य बनाया है। कर्तव्याकर्तव्य उपदेश की शक्ति नारीपात्र में दिखलायी है।

लज्जा को नारी का भूषण माना गया है और क्वचित् लज्जा नारी की शक्ति भी है। लज्जा और सुस्वभाव नारी को मर्यादा प्रदान करते हैं। जैसे शाकुन्तलम् में शकुन्तला के लज्जा–वनत आवृत रूप को देखकर दुष्यन्त मर्यादाभरे शब्दों से कहते हैं –

का स्विदवगुण्ठनवती नातिपरिस्फुटशरीरलावण्या।
मध्ये तपोधनानां किसलयमिव पाण्डुपत्राणाम्।।

(5–13)

कालिदास के नारी पात्र कहीं भी सामाजिक उच्छृंखलता से युक्त नहीं हैं। समाज के प्रति उनका उत्तरदायित्व तथा जिम्मेदारी का सफल निर्वाह उनको आदर के पात्र बनाते हैं। शक्ति तो वही है जिस से समाज की सुसंरचना और कल्याण सम्भव होने के कारण विसंगति– रहित हो। इस प्रकार की नारी सामर्थ्य कालिदास की कृतियों में प्रतिफलित है।

कालिदास की नायिकाएँ

डॉ.भास्कराचार्य त्रिपाठी

यथार्थ को कल्पना–तूलिका से सँवारती हुई, आदर्श का चित्रांकन करती है कविता। विश्वकवि कालिदास ने नारी के रूप–सन्दर्भ लिए, तो एक–एक अंग पर सृष्टिकर्ता ब्रह्मा को दीवालिया बनाकर छोड़ दिया। पार्वती की एड़ियों के ऊपर सुडौल लोरे कैसे रहे होंगे!
वे कहते हैं –

वृत्तानुपूर्वे च न चातिदीर्घे जङ्‌घे शुभे सृष्टवतस्तदीये
शेषांगनिर्माणविधौ विधातुर्लावण्य उत्पाद्य इवास यत्नः।

(कुमार. 1.35)

यहाँ 'शुभे' विशेषण बड़े महत्त्व का है। इसके दो अर्थ होते हैं– चमकीले और पवित्र। पहले अर्थ वाले लोरे तो संसार में और 'ब्रिलिएण्ट हिरोइंस' के मिल जाएँगे। पर 'शुभे' के उभयविध अर्थ वाले लोरों की झलक पानी हो तो कुमारसम्भवम् की पार्वती के ही दर्शन करने पड़ेंगे।

दूसरी नायिका की रचना करते समय, लाचारी के दुष्परिणाम झेलने से पहले ही ब्रह्मा ने 'कैजुअल लीव' ले ली। उन्होंने घर से ही कहला दिया कि आज चन्द्रमा, कामदेव या वसन्त ऋतु जो भी सीनियर हो, उसे चार्ज दे दो। उर्वशी को देखकर यह पुरूरवा की उक्ति है –

अस्याः सर्गविधौ प्रजापतिरभूच्चन्द्रो नु कान्तिप्रदः
श्रृंगारैकरसः स्वयं नु मदनो मासो नु पुष्पाकरः
वेदाभ्यासजडः कथन्नु विषयव्यावृत्तकौतूहलो
निर्मातुं प्रभवेन्मनोहरमिदं रूपं पुराणो मुनिः।

(विक्र. 1.10)

उन्होंने एक बालिका से लेकर वात्सल्यमयी माँ तक, नारी के हाव–भाव भी खूब वर्णित किए हैं। उनके काव्य में किसी पहाड़ी कन्दरा के बीच वनबाला

का दुपट्टा हिलते ही 'ज़ीरो पावर बल्ब जैसी' औषधियाँ चमकने लगती हैं और दरवाजे पर ढलके हुए बादल 'यू शेप कर्टेन' बन जाते हैं। कुमारसम्भव की पंक्तियाँ हैं –

वनेचराणां वनितासखानां दरीगृहोत्संगनिषक्तमासः
भवन्ति यत्रौषधयो रजन्यामतैलपूराः सुरतप्रदीपाः।
यत्रांशुकाक्षेपविलज्जितानां यदृच्छया किम्पुरूषांगनानाम्
दरीगृहद्वारविलम्बिबिम्बास्तिरस्करिण्यो जलदा भवन्ति।

इन सौन्दर्य–रेखाओं के साथ एक तरूणी चन्दन के पौधे सी कहीं 'ट्रांसप्लांट' होकर कभी श्रद्धा (शाकुन्तल 4.18.6 तथा 7.29) बनती है, पटन–मधु सी (माल.2.1.1) नेत्रों को शीतलता देती है और उजली–मीठी मदिरा मत्स्यण्डिका (वही 3.5.4) सी अपने प्रणयी को पूर्णतया वश में कर लेती है। उसका समर्पण भाव ही वह सर्वंकष तपस्या है, जिससे उसकी महावर को अग्निमित्र फूँक–फूँक कर सुखाना चाहता है। वह कहता है –

आर्द्रालक्तकमस्याश्चरणं मुखमारूतेन शोषयितुम्
प्रतिपन्नः प्रथमतरः सम्प्रति सेवाऽवकाशो मे । 3.13

कामदेव (कुमार 4.17) और दुष्यन्त (शाकु.7.23.3) पैरों पर लोट जाते हैं। पुरूरवा उसकी चरणसेवा में प्रतिनियुक्ति को राज्यवैभव से बड़ा मानते हैं –

सामन्तमौलिमणिरञ्जितपादपीठ–
मेकातपत्रमवनेर्न तथा प्रभुत्वम्।
अस्याः सखे चरणयोरहमद्य कान्त–
माज्ञाकरत्वमधिगम्य यथा कृतार्थः।। 3.19

इसी श्रृंखला में कभी काम–दहन का नाटक करने वाले भगवान् शिव प्रत्यक्ष रूप में तो आधा शरीर देते हैं, पर पार्वती के नाम 'रजिस्ट्री' अपने समूचे व्यक्तित्व की कर देते हैं। उसकी सही प्रतिलिपि कुछ यूँ है –

अद्य प्रभृत्यवनतांगि तवास्मि दासः
क्रीतस्तपोभिरिति वादिनि चन्द्रमौलौ

अह्नाय सा नियमजं क्लममुम्त्ससर्ज
क्लेशः फलेन हि पुनर्नवतां विद्यत्ते।

इससे अधिक नारी की शक्तिमत्ता एवम् अधिकारशीलता और क्या होगी? कालिदास की नायिकाएँ सुनहली कल्पलताएँ हैं। वैसी ही कल्प–लताएँ हर कविता और घर–आँगन में लहराएँ।

संस्कृत गीत

सुवर्ण–कल्पवल्लरी

सुवर्ण–कल्पवल्लरी सखे न लूयतां,
कालिदासपालिता हि सा.
नितान्तकान्तकोमला विलास–लास्यविह्वला
कलापबन्धकुन्तला कलामयी शकुन्तला
सुगन्धमादनी न विस्मृता विलीयतां,
मेनकानिभालिता हि सा ...
तपःप्रकर्षशालिनी वलित्रयालवालिनी
रसाप्लुता प्रतानिनी च या हिमाद्रिनन्दिनी
अनंगसज्जिता न निष्फला निवर्त्ततां,
नीलकण्ठलालिता हि सा ...
रथानुषक्तकन्धरा यदुर्वशी प्रियंवरा
नवीनरागबन्धुरा बभूव गोत्रभंगुरा
अलंकृतिस्वरूपिणी क्षणं न मुच्यतां,
यत्नतः प्रसादिता हि सा ...
प्रतीयमानविभ्रमा शरीरधारिणी रमा
नभोऽग्निभूमिसंक्रमा विदेहजा मनोरमा
कदापि चन्द्रहासरेखया न दूयतां,
रामनामकीलिता हि सा ...

तेजस्विता एवं सबलता के रूप: कालिदासीय नारीपात्र

प्रो. हरिदत्त शर्मा

संस्कृत–साहित्याकाश के प्रकाश महाकवि कालिदास को 'कविता–कामिनी का विलास' कहा गया है। वे श्रृंगार के प्रसिद्ध रससिद्ध कवि हैं। वे प्रकृति, प्रेम एवं सौन्दर्य के सुकुमार कवि हैं। यह निश्चित है कि उनकी कविता में भावगत सौकुमार्य उनकी नायिकाओं और नारीपात्रों से आया है। उनके नारीपात्र सुकुमार हैं, सौन्दर्य के सार हैं। उनमें अन्तः सौन्दर्य एवं बाह्य सौन्दर्य का विलक्षण समन्वय है। निसर्गकन्या, शकुन्तला हो अथवा रतिरससिक्ता मालविका, रघुवंश की निष्कलुषचरित्रशीला सीता हो अथवा कुमारसम्भव की दृढ़चारित्र्यशालिनी पार्वती, मेघदूत की विरह–विधुरा यक्षिणी हो अथवा विक्रमोर्वशीय अप्रतिम सुन्दरी उर्वशी, सभी के चरित्रों में एक विलक्षण तेजस्विता और भास्वरता है, जीवन के उच्चावच पथों में चलने की एक शक्तिमत्ता है। यक्षिणी, शकुन्तला, पार्वती एवं इन्दुमती सभी ऐसे कवि–कलाकार की तूलिका से चित्रित अद्भुत अपूर्व सौन्दर्य की सृष्टि हैं, जिनका नखशिख वर्णन करने में कवि ने कल्पना का विशाल प्राकार खड़ा किया है। परन्तु दृष्टि के एक अन्य कोण से देखें तो हमें इन नारीपात्रों में वह प्रतिमूर्ति भी दृष्यमान होती है जो नारी सशक्तीकरण की प्रतीक है और जो आज के युग की संवेदना के अनुरूप है तथा आज के युग में प्रासंगिक है। आज के युग में हमें उस नारीपात्र की अधिक आवश्यकता है जो सौन्दर्य एवं शील सम्पन्न अवश्य हो, परन्तु आवश्यकता पड़ने पर वह अग्नि के समान उद्दीप्त भी होता हुआ दिखाई पड़े, वह शीतल और शान्त रहते हुए भी अग्निगर्भा शमी की भाँति अवसर आने पर अथवा समाज के किसी भी पक्ष से घर्षण पाने पर प्रज्वलित हो उठता है।

कालिदास की नायिकाओं और अन्य नारीपात्रों का यदि हम इस दृष्टि से परिनिरीक्षण करें तो पायेंगे कि उनमें वह तेजस्विता और सबलता भी है जिसकी आधुनिक युग में आवश्यकता है। कालिदास के रघुवंश में नायकों की भूमिका प्रधान है, फिर भी कुछ नारी चरित्र उभरे हैं। राजा दिलीप की पत्नी सुदक्षिणा एक आदर्श नारी है, जो सेवा, कर्तव्यनिष्ठा एवं नियम–पालन में आस्था रखने में सब परिस्थितियों में अपने पति के साथ खड़ी रहती है। वह नन्दिनी गाय की सेवा में वन–वन तो नहीं भटकती, परन्तु गो सेवारत पति एवं गाय के लौटने पर एक पतिव्रता सती–साध्वी का रूप प्रदर्शित करती है।

नारीचरित्र की दृढ़ता, धीरता एवं स्थिरता का दर्शन कालिदास ने पार्वती के चरित्र में कराया है। पार्वती सच्चे हृदय से शंकर को प्रेम करती हैं; उन्हें प्राप्त करने के लिए कठोर तपस्या की आग में अपने को झोंक देती हैं। पार्वती की यह तपस्या ही उसकी तेजस्विता है, सबलता है जो उसके पालन में आने वाले किसी भी विघ्न को भी नहीं सहन करती। शिव छद्म वेष में जब उसकी परीक्षा लेने का प्रयास करते हैं तो किसी भी तरह नहीं डिगतीं। उनकी तेजस्विता इस तप में है –

शुचौ चतुर्णां ज्वलतां हविर्भुजां
शुचिस्मिता मध्यगता सुमध्यमा।
विजित्य नेत्रप्रतिघातिनीं प्रभा
मनन्यदृष्टिः सवितारमैक्षत।। (कु. 5–20)

अर्थात पतली कमरवाली हँसमुख पार्वती गर्मी के दिनों में अपने चारों और आग जलाकर उसी के बीच खड़ी रहने लगीं और चकाचौंध करने वाले सूर्य के प्रकाश को भी जीतकर वे सूर्य की ओर एकटक होकर देखती रहने लगीं। उनका तप ऐसा है कि बड़े से बड़े तपस्वी भी उससे शिक्षा ले सकते हैं। छद्मवेषी ब्रह्मचारी तरह–तरह की नकारात्मक बातें कर पार्वती को बहलाना–फुसलाना चाहता है। ऐसी विषम स्थिति में पार्वती का वही दो–टूक उत्तर है जो किसी के बहकावे में न आने वाली और अपनी

बात पर अड़िग रहने वाली किसी महिला में हो सकता है –

अलं विवादेन यथा श्रुतस्त्वया
तथाविधस्तावदशेषमस्तु सः।
ममात्र भावैकरसं मनः स्थितं
न कामवृत्तिर्वचनीयमीक्षते।। (कु. 5–82)

बस, अब झगड़ा मत कीजिए। आपने उन शिव को जैसा सुना, वो वैसे ही सही, पर मेरा मन तो उन्हीं में रम गया है। जब किसी का मन किसी पर लग जाता है तब वह किसी के कहने–सुनने पर ध्यान थोड़े ही देता है। यहाँ पार्वती के चरित्र की वह दृढ़ता तथा अपने विवाह जैसे वैयक्तिक विषय में स्वयं निर्णय लेने की क्षमता को कवि ने उद्घाटित किया है जो आज भी विवाह को बेटे– बेटी पर थोप देने में ही अपनी शान समझते हैं।

कालिदास के नारीपात्रों में से कुछ एक अपूर्व शक्तिमन्ता से युक्त बनकर निकले हैं, जो अवसर आने पर पुरूष के पौरूष के अहंकार को ललकार सकते हैं और राजतन्त्र एवं राजसत्ता को भी चुनौती दे सकते हैं। ऐसी ही परिस्थिति रघुवंश महाकाव्य के चतुर्दश सर्ग में आती है जब राम लोकापवाद के दबाव में आकर सीता के निर्वासन का निर्णय लेते हैं। दोहद कार्य के लिए वन में ले जाई गई सीता से जब लक्ष्मण पहली बार अपने अग्रज महाराज राम का कठोर आदेश सुनाते हैं तो सीता इस भारी आघात को सहन न कर पाती हुई भूमि पर गिर पडती हैं और मूर्च्छित हो जाती हैं। फिर मूर्च्छा टूटने पर वे धीरे–धीरे इस वज्रघात से अपने को बाहर निकालती हैं और नारी–तेजस्विता से देदीप्यमान अपने सही स्वरूप में सामने आती हैं। वे पहले अपनी सासों को सन्देश भेजती हैं, पर लक्ष्मण द्वारा सीता जो दूसरा सन्देश भेजती हैं वह अपने पति राम को नहीं, अपितु राज्य की सर्वोच्च सत्ता पर आसीन उस राजा राम को यह सन्देश भेजती हैं –

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात् स राजा
वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।

मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः

श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य।। (रघु, 14–61)

सीता कहती है कि मेरी ओर से तुम उस राजा से जाकर कहना कि आपने अपने सामने ही मुझे अग्नि में शुद्ध पाया था। और इस समय लोकापवाद के डर से जो आपने मुझे छोड़ दिया है तो यह क्या उस प्रसिद्ध कुल को शोभा देता है जिसमें आपने जन्म लिया है। सीता की आगे कही गई बातों में जो तीखापन है वह पुरूष–प्रधान समाज और सिंहासनारूढ़ महाराज दोनों को ललकारता हुआ अपना आक्रोश व्यक्त करता है। रघुवंश की सीता उत्तररामचरित की सीता की तरह परित्यक्ता अबला बन केवल आँसू ही नहीं बहाती, अपितु राजा के सामने अपना तीखा प्रतिवाद प्रस्तुत करती है और एक अदद पति की पत्नी के स्थान पर एक राजा की प्रजा बन जाती है। सीता का सम्पूर्ण चरित्र और उनके द्वारा दिया गया वक्तव्य महिला–सशक्तीकरण की आधारशिला का काम करता है।

सीता–चरित्र द्वारा यहाँ परोक्ष रूप में राजसत्ता को कोसा गया है, परन्तु कालिदास के विश्वविश्रुत नाटक अभिज्ञान शाकुन्तल की शकुन्तला तो भरी राजसभा में राजसत्ता को उसके अनुचित कार्य के लिए चुनौती देती है। शाकुन्तल के पञ्चम अंक में जब राजा दुष्यन्त बार–बार याद दिलाने पर भी, पूर्व प्रणय–प्रसंगों को स्मरित कराने पर भी शकुन्तला से अपने गान्धर्व विवाह को याद नहीं कर पाता तो धीरे–धीरे शकुन्तला का धैर्य समाप्त होने लगता है। अपनी अभिज्ञान रूप अँगूठी को न दिखा पाने पर जब वह स्त्रीमात्र पर या स्त्री जाति पर '**स्त्रीणामशिक्षितपटुत्वममानुषीणां**' आदि कहकर आक्षेप लगा देता है तो शील, सौन्दर्य एवं सौकुमार्य की प्रतिमूर्ति शकुन्तला उद्दीप्त हो उठती है। जो कुछ क्षण पहले मधुर प्रणयप्रसंगों को सुनाकर दुष्यन्त के सामने प्रणययाचना कर रही थी, वही शकुन्तला भरी सभा में समुद्ररशना पृथ्वी का शासन करने वाले एकच्छत्र सम्राट को बुरी तरह लताड़ती हुई कहती है –

''अनार्य! आत्मनो हृदयानुमानेन प्रेक्षसे। क इदानीमन्यो धर्म–

कञ्चुक प्रवेशिनस्तृणच्छन्न कूपोपमस्य तवानुकृतिं प्रतिपत्स्यते?''

अनार्य! तुम सबके हृदय को अपने हृदय की तरह खोटा समझते हो! तुम्हें छोड़कर कौन ऐसा नीच होगा जो घास–फूस से ढके हुए कुँए के समान धर्म का ढोंग रचकर ऐसा खोटा काम कर सके।

शकुन्तला का इस तरह बिफर पड़ना और इतने बड़े शक्तिस्तम्भ को जलील कर हिला देना साधारण बात नहीं है। कालिदास ने यह दिखा दिया है कि स्त्रीत्व के स्वाभिमान को ठेस लगने पर, अत्याचार और आघात होने पर नारी इतना आक्रामक रूप भी धारण कर सकती है, जिसके आगे एक बार सत्ता की नींव भी हिल जाय। शकुन्तला का यह चरित्र अबला बनी डरी–सहमी नारी के लिए एक बड़ा प्रेरणादीप है, जो अत्याचार सहकर भी मौन रह जाती है। कालिदास के नारीपात्र–पार्वती, सीता एवं शकुन्तला–सचमुच आधुनिक युग में नारीशक्ति–जागरण एवं महिला–सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में एक अद्भुत प्रेरणास्त्रोत हैं।

कालिदासकृतरूपकों के स्त्रीपात्रों में नारी–सशक्तीकरण के स्वर

प्रो. प्रभुनाथ द्विवेदी

विद्याऽविद्या सुधानन्दा या जगज्जननी स्मृता।
देवीं शक्तिस्वरूपां तां नमामि परमेश्वरीम्।।१।।
नारी दाराः कलत्रञ्च त्रिषुलिंगेषु विश्रुता।
गृहिणी सैव भार्या च माता स्वर्गाद् गरीयसी।।२।।
कालिदासस्य साहित्ये रूपकेषु विशेषतः।
नारीणां विविधं रूपं भासते कविकल्पितम्।।३।।
क्वचित्सीता क्वचिन्मेना गौतमी च शकुन्तला।
उर्वशी धारिणी चोमा मालविका प्रियंवदा।।४।।
इरावत्यनसूये ते तापसी च परिव्रजा।
तास्तास्तेषु चरित्रेषु प्रयुक्ता भावनोदिताः।।५।।
भवत्येव समाजस्य साहित्यं प्रतिरूपकम्।
अतश्चरित्रवैशिष्ट्यं तासामद्यापि मृग्यते।।६।।
आदर्शं भवितुं नूनमत्र भारतसंस्कृतौ।
ता अर्हन्ति समस्तानां नारीणां शक्तिसञ्चये।।७।।[1]
'या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः'।।[2]

जो नारी स्वयं शक्तिस्वरूपा है, उसके सशक्तीकरण की उद्भावना कुछ तर्कसंगत नहीं प्रतीत होती। यदि हम भारतीय संस्कृति के पुरा परिदृश्यों का सिंहावलोकन करें, तो हमें शास्त्र या लोक में कहीं नारी

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[1] श्लोक १से ७ तक स्वोपज्ञ।

[2] श्रीमार्कण्डेय पुराण, श्रीदुर्गासप्तशती, अध्याय–5 श्लोक –32–34

के उसके अधिकार की संरक्षा तथा पुरूष प्रधान समाज में उसे सम्मानित स्थान दिलाना होना चाहिए अपितु नारी पक्ष सम्बद्ध सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों की रक्षा भी होनी चाहिए। साथ ही हमें यह भी ध्यान रखना नितान्त आवश्यक है कि नारी–सशक्तीकरण का उद्देश्य 'स्वेच्छाचार' न होकर 'स्वच्छाचार' हो। कालिदास के रूपकों के स्त्रीचरित्र से निकले स्वरों की निष्कृट अनुगूँज यही है।

प्रत्येक संस्कृत–अध्येता जानता है कि कविकुलगुरू कालिदास के तीन रूपक प्रसिद्ध हैं – मालविकाग्निमित्र, विक्रमोर्वशीय और अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल। इन तीनों में अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल विश्वनाट्यसाहित्य का अमूल्यसर्वोत्तम नाट्यरत्न है। यदि हम 'कालिदाससर्वस्वमभिज्ञान–शाकुन्तलम्' कहें तो अत्युक्ति न होगी। शेष दोनों रूपक भी महाकवि के नाट्य कौशल के परिचायक हैं। अतःहम महाकवि के स्वर में स्वर मिलाते हुए – 'सन्तः परीक्ष्यान्तरद् भजन्ते' – अपने आलोच्य विषय पर आते हैं।

महाकवि के रूपकों के प्रमुख नारी चरित्रों का विश्लेषण प्रस्तुत करने से पूर्व यहाँ हम सहृदय विद्वानों का ध्यान, उनके दो विशिष्ट स्त्रीपात्रों – रघुवंश की सीता और कुमारसम्भव की पार्वती (उमा) की ओर ले जाना चाहेंगे। भारतीय संस्कृति की संवाहिका और स्त्रीमर्यादा की आदर्श प्रतिरूप ये दानों नारियाँ अपने शालीन वचनों से आज की स्त्रियों के लिए सशक्तीकरण का सन्देश दे रही हैं किन्तु दोनों के शक्तिसञ्चय के मूल में तप है – यह आज की नारियों को नहीं भूलना चाहिए। सुधीजन, कुमारसमभव के पञ्चमसर्ग का वह प्रसंग स्मरण करें जहाँ छद्म–बटु की शिव के प्रति कटूक्तियों को सुनकर सहनशीला धैर्यवती पार्वती भभक उठी और उस बटु को झिड़कने लगी –

' इति द्विजातौ प्रतिकूलवादिनि प्रवेपमानाधरलक्ष्यकोपया।
विकुञ्चितभ्रूलतमाहिते तया विलोचने तिर्यगुपान्तलोहिते।।
उवाच चैनं परमार्थतो हरं न वेत्सि नूनं यत एवमात्थ माम्।
अलोकसामान्यमचिन्त्यहेतुकं द्विषन्ति मन्दाश्चरितं महातमनाम्।।[6]

शासनकाल में नारी की दशा और भी विषम अथ च, दयनीय हो गयी, जिसका कुप्रभाव आज भी समाज में किसी न किसी रूप में बना हुआ है। यहाँ केवल, 'ढोल गँवार शूद्रपशुनारी', 'नारी तुम केवल श्रद्धा हो', 'अबला जीवन हाय तुम्हारी यही कहानी आँचल में है दूध और आँखों में है पानी' इत्यादि वचनों से उसका संकेत मात्र करना समीचीन होगा क्योंकि हमें मुख्य विषय से विचलित नहीं होना है। हाँ, तो जबसे नारी पर 'अबलत्व' का आरोप कर उसे उसकी स्वतन्त्रता से वंचित कर दिया गया, नारी के सशक्तीकरण की चर्चा तब से प्रारम्भ हुई। वर्तमान परिवेश में स्त्रियों के प्रति हो रहे अन्याय और अत्याचार के कारण नारी सशक्तीकरण जोर पकड़ कर एक आन्दोलन का रूप ले रहा है।

प्रस्तुत शोधपरिचर्चा के सन्दर्भ में प्रश्नगत विषय है कि महाकवि कालिदास के स्त्रीपात्रों को वर्तमान में 'कन्याओं' के लिए सशक्तीकरण हेतु आदर्श चरित्र के रूप में माना जा सकता है अथवा नहीं? महाकवि कालिदास उस भारतीय समाज और संस्कृति का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं जो आज से प्रायः 2200 वर्षों पूर्व था किन्तु आज का भारतीय सामाजिक परिवेश उससे बहुत कुछ भिन्न हो चला है और राष्ट्र का सांस्कृतिक परिदृश्य भी पर्याप्त रूप से पाश्चात्त्य अपसंस्कृति से प्रभावित हो चुका है। 'स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन् पृथिव्यां सर्वमानवाः' वाला भारत स्वयं 'शैक्ष्य' की कोटि तक आ पहुँचा है। ऐसी स्थिति में अपनी श्रेष्ठ पारम्परिक आचार निधि के मूल का अनुसन्धान करना सर्वथा प्रासंगिक और समीचीन है। इससे हमारे सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक प्रदूषण का निवारण हो सकेगा।

नारी सशक्तीकरण को मैं दैवीशक्ति के पुनर्जागरण के रूप में देखता हूँ। इसका उद्देश्य, न केवल नारी के प्रति हो रहे अन्याय–अत्याचार का प्रतीकार अर्थात् उस पर लगे मात्र 'भोग्या'[5] के लाञ्छन को मिटाना, उसे अबला जैसी दीनहीन छवि से मुक्त कराना, अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतन्त्रता

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[5] कोशकारों ने उसे 'भोग्या' से 'आमिष' की कोटि तक गिरा दिया।

अशक्त नहीं दृष्टिगोचर होती। उसकी पारिवारिक अथवा सामाजिक स्थिति कथमपि पुरूष से न्यून अथवा हीन नहीं ज्ञात होती। वैदिक ऋषि उसे 'साम्राज्ञी श्वसुरे भव'[3] का आशीर्वाद देता है और लोक उसे 'इयं गेहे लक्ष्मी:'[4] के रूप में स्वीकार करता है। इतिहास साक्षी है कि नारी ने अपनी स्वतन्त्रता का सदुपयोग अपने चारित्रिक उत्कर्ष और कौटुम्बिक आदर्श की स्थापना में किया है और किसी कारणवश यदि नारी की मर्यादा का अतिक्रमण अथवा उसके सम्मान पर आघात करने की चेष्टा की गयी है तो ऐसे विकृताचारी को कठोरतम दण्ड का भागी होना पड़ा है।

यदि हम पौराणिक सन्दर्भों का इस दृष्टि से पुनरावलोकन करें तो निश्चय ही हमे उत्साहप्रद तथ्य प्राप्त होंगे। अतिमानवीय नारियों के सशक्तीकरण की बात ही क्या! मानवीय नारियाँ भी पुञ्जीभूत शक्ति के पर्याय के रूप में दिखायी पड़ती हैं। सीता, सावित्री, दमयन्ती, द्रौपदी आदि अनेक उदाहरण हैं। महाभारत का 'विदुलोपख्यान' विख्यात ही है। इन स्त्रियों ने स्वयं तो दृढ़शक्ति का परिचय दिया ही, अपने पुत्र, पति तथा अन्य लोगों को भी उनकी शक्ति का एहसास कराया। भारतीय स्वातन्त्र्यसंग्राम में भी स्त्रियों के शौर्य को कम करके नहीं आँका जा सकता।

एक युग वह भी था जब भारतीय समाज मातृप्रधान था। अनेक उल्लेखों से यह तथ्य प्रमाणित होता है (दाक्षीपुत्रस्य पाणिने:,)। यह भी एक अपवाद हो सकता है; किन्तु वर्तामान विश्व समाज तो पितृप्रधान या प्रकारान्तर से, पुरूषप्रधान है। ऐसे समाज में प्रश्न नारी–विशेष का नहीं, नारी–सामान्य का है जो उनकी दशा, और उनके अधिकार से जुडा हुआ है। इस विषय में प्राचीन धर्मशास्त्रकारों और धार्मिक सम्प्रदायाचार्यों ने मातृशक्ति के रूप में नारी का सम्मान करते हुए भी नारी–सामान्य की शक्ति का ह्रास करने की चेष्टा की। मुख्य रूप से यवनों के आक्रमण और

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[3] ऋग्वेद, १०.८५.४६.

[4] भवभूतिकृतउत्तररामचरित,१.३८

और अन्ततः कहा – '' **निवार्यतामालि किमप्ययं बटुः।**''[7]

श्रीराम द्वारा सीता के निर्वासन का चाहे जो भी निहितार्थ रहा हो, महाकवि ने रघुवंशमहाकाव्य में उसे जिस प्रकार प्रस्तुत किया है, वह अत्यन्त आवर्जक है। कालिदास का यह प्रातिभवैशिष्ट्य है कि वे मितशब्दों में ही अमित भावों की व्यञ्जना करा देते हैं। प्रस्तुत प्रसंग में रामानुज लक्ष्मण द्वारा वन में परित्यक्ता सीता अपने प्रति किये गये अन्याय के प्रति अपना विरोध प्रकाशितकरती हुई श्रीराम को सन्देश देती है –

''वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासी श्रुतस्य किं तत् सदृशं कुलस्य।।''[8]

यहाँ, सीता जैसी शीलवती पतिव्रता नारी भी अपने को रोक नहीं सकी, उपालम्भ ही सही, उसने व्यञ्जना द्वारा श्रीराम को यह बता दिया कि उसके प्रति पतिधर्म का कतई निर्वाह नहीं किया है और राजा के रूप में जो यह किया है वह भी अन्याय है। नारी सशक्तीकरण का दृढ़ स्वर इसी प्रसंग में वासन्ती द्वारा प्रसारित किया गया है, जब वह उत्तररामचरित में श्रीराम को झिड़कती हैं–

'अयि कठोर यशः किलते प्रियं किमयशो ननु घोरमतः परम्।
किमभवद् विपिने हरिणीदृशः कथय नाथ कथं बत मन्यसे?।।[9]

सीता–निर्वासन के पीछे क्या कारण माना जाय? राम का प्रजारंजन का व्रत, राम की राजा के रूप में यशः प्रियता, अथवा, आधुनिक प्रजातान्त्रिक सन्दर्भ में अल्पसंख्यकों के प्रति तुष्टीकरण की नीति! क्या राम का यह व्यवहार नारी को सशक्त बनने के लिए उकसाता नहीं?

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[6] कुमारसम्भव महाकाव्य, ५.७४–७५

[7] वहीं, ५.८३

[8] रघुवंशमहाकाव्य, १४.६१

[9] उत्तररामचरित, ३, २७

आइए, महाकविकालिदास के रूपकों के प्रमुख नारी पात्रों के चरित्र का अनुसन्धान करते हैं और सर्वप्रथम कण्व दुहिता, दुष्यन्तप्रिया शकुन्तला के स्वर का अभिज्ञान करते हैं। महर्षि कण्व कुछ दिनों के लिए आश्रम का भार शकुन्तला को देकर सोमतीर्थ में प्रवास करते हैं। तापसी गौतमी अथवा, आश्रम के अन्य ऋषियों और आचार्यों को इस दायित्व में नहीं नियुक्त कर सकते थे? क्यों उन्होंने शकुन्तला को उपयुक्त माना? कन्या हुई तो क्या? वे शकुन्तला की शक्ति को पहचानते थे। इसीलिए पादप संरक्षण, अतिथिसपर्या आदि आश्रम के कार्यों में उसे नियुक्त करके निश्चिन्त हो चले गये। राजा दुष्यन्त आश्रम में प्रथमतया उसे पादपसेचन करते हुए देखता है और श्रमासह उसकी सुकुमारता पर तरस खाता है –

'इदं किलाव्याजमनोहरं वपुः तपः क्षमं साधयितुं य इच्छति।
ध्रुवं स नीलोत्पलपत्रधारया शमीलतां छेत्तुमृषिर्व्यवस्यति।।'[10]

अरे दुष्यन्त, तरस तो तुम पर मुझे आता है। तुमने शकुन्तला की अन्तः शक्ति नहीं पहचाना। शकुन्तला तो स्वयं शमी है, उस निसर्ग कन्या में अन्तर्दृढता संघनित और परिपक्व है। दैवी वाणी जानती है – **'अग्निगर्भां शमीमिव।'**[11] शकुन्तला के इस अग्निगर्भशमीत्व का परिचय आगे मिलता है।

अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल के पञ्चम अंक में शकुन्तला अपने स्वयंवृत पति राजा दुष्यन्त के समक्ष पत्नी के रूप में नारी सुलभ लज्जा के साथ आती है। किन्तु न्यायपीठासीन राजा दुष्यन्त जब उसके सहयात्री बटुओं और तापसी गौतमी के वचनों पर विश्वास न करते हुए, आश्रम में किये गये गान्धर्व विवाह को विस्मृत कर शकुन्तला पर आक्षेप करते हुए तिरस्कृत करने लगा, तब शकुन्तला की नारी शक्ति ने ललकारा और दुष्यन्त को चेतावनी दी –

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[10] अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल, १.१८

[11] वहीं, ४.४.

''**पौरव, न युक्तं नाम ते तथा पुराश्रमपदे स्वभावोत्तानहृदयमिमंजनं समयपूर्वं प्रतार्य ईदृशैरक्षरैः प्रत्याख्यातुम्।**''[12]

इसके बाद भी शकुन्तला द्वारा बार–बार स्मरण दिलाये जाने पर दुष्यन्त की हठवादिता भरी अस्वीकृति पर शकुन्तला झल्ला पड़ी और दुष्यन्त को कठोर शब्दों में जमकर फटकारा – ''**अनार्य! आत्मनो हृदयानुमानेन पश्यसि। क इदानीमन्यो धर्मकञ्चुकप्रवेशिनः तृणच्छन्नकूपोपमस्य तवानुकृतिं प्रतिपत्स्यते?**''[13]

निश्छल और आत्मविश्वास से भरी हुई शकुन्तुला के इस औचित्यमय दृढ़ स्वर ने स्वयं ही उसे नारी–सशक्तीकरण का आदर्श प्रतिरूप बना दिया।

शकुन्तला की दोनों सखियाँ भी कम नहीं। अनसूया शान्त, धीर और मितभाषिणी है और प्रियंवदा चुलबुली–बातूनी। दुर्वासा जैसे सुलभ कोप महर्षि को अपनी प्रिय सखी के पक्ष में करके दारूण शाप को नाममात्रावशेष करा लेना सबके वश की बात नहीं। अनसूया की प्रेरणा से प्रियंवदा ने क्रोधाननलावतार दुर्वासा के समक्ष जाने का साहस किया। प्रियंवदा के इस अपूर्व साहस और उसके वचनों में नारी सशक्तीकरण का स्वर सूक्ष्म किन्तु स्पष्ट है।

'विक्रमोर्वशीय' में काशीराज कन्या राजमहिषी (जिसे देवी कहा गया है) का तृतीयअंकगत चरित्र नारी सशक्तीकरण के लिए उपयुक्त निदर्शन है। राजा के प्रति कोपाविष्ट देवी के प्रसादन के लिए राजा प्रणिपात भी करता है। विदूषक यद्यपि देवी के व्रतस्थ रूप को देखकर कुछ आशान्वित है तथापि भयविष्ट भी है– '**भोः, न जानामि स्वस्तिवाचनं मे ददातीति अथवा, व्रतव्यपदेशेन मुक्तरोषा भवतः प्रणिपातलंघनं प्रमार्ष्टुकामेति। अद्य मे अक्ष्णोः शुभदर्शना देवी।**'[14] राजा भी कुछ आश्वस्त है –

[12] वहीं, ५.२० के पश्चात् संवाद गद्य.

[13] वहीं, ५.२२ के पश्चात् संवाद गद्य.

[14] विक्रमोर्वशीय, ३.१२ से पूर्व।

'सितांशुका मंगलमात्रभूषणा पवित्रदूर्वांकुरलाञ्छितालका।
व्रतापदेशोज्झितगर्ववृत्तिना मयि प्रसन्ना वपुषैव लक्ष्यते।।'[15]

कालिदास के 'मालविकाग्निमित्र' नाटक की इरावती (अग्निमित्र की द्वितीय पत्नी) तो तृतीय अंक में अपने पति राजा अग्निमित्र को दासी (मालविका) से प्रेमालाप करते हुए देखकर इतनी अधिक क्रूद्ध हो जाती है कि राजा को मेखलादाम से पीटने के लिए उद्यत हो जाती है – **'इयमपि हताशा त्वामेवानुसरति। (इति रसनामादाय राजानं ताडयितुमिच्छति)'** [16] राजा भी विदूषक से चण्डी बनी इरावती के इस प्रयास को कहता है –

'चण्डी चण्डं हन्तुमभ्युद्यता मां
विद्युद्दाम्ना मेघराजीव विन्ध्यम्।।' [17]

उपर्युक्त विश्लेषण के आधार पर हम कह सकते हैं कि महाकवि कालिदास की नाट्य– कृतियों के नारी पात्रों के चरित्र में नारी सशक्तीकरण के स्वर असन्दिग्धरूप से मुखरित हैं।

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[15] वहीं, ३.१२,

[16] मालविकाग्निमित्र, ३.२० के पश्चात्।

[17] वहीं, ३.२१.

महाकवि कालिदास कृत नाटकों में नारी–सशक्तीकरण (मालविकाग्निमित्रम् एवं विक्रमोर्वशीयम् के सन्दर्भ में)

डॉ. रजनी जोशी चौधरी

आज हमारे देश भारत में, जिसका उद्‌गम वेदों एवं स्मृतियों से हुआ और जहाँ पर **'यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः'** जैसे दर्शन को स्थान मिला हो, वहाँ भी हम नारी–सशक्तीकरण की बात करते हैं। अतः स्वतः ही एक जिज्ञासा प्रश्न रूप में उत्पन्न हो जाती है कि भारत देश में इस नारी सशक्तीकरण का प्रादुर्भाव कहां से और कैसे हो गया? अगर हम नारी सशक्तीकरण के इतिहास की ओर दृष्टिपात करें तो देश में स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद महिलाओं से संबन्धित अनेकों ऐसी योजनाएं पंचवर्षीय योजनाओं के अन्तर्गत बनी जो किसी ना किसी रूप में महिला–कल्याण, महिला–स्वास्थ्य, महिला–शिक्षा, महिलाओं के सामाजिक–आर्थिक स्थिति के उन्नयन, मातृ एवं शिशु पोषण तथा परिवार कल्याण से सम्बन्धित थी, परन्तु 6ठीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में एकदम परिवर्तन आया और नारी विकास का एक अध्याय, योजना के अन्तर्गत सम्मिलित किया गया और महिला अध्ययन केन्द्रों की स्थापना की जाने लगी। आठवीं योजना (१९९२–१९७१) में नारी को राजनैतिक प्रक्रिया में ७३ वें और ७४ वें संशोधन के माध्यम से स्थान दिया गया। साथ में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन में नारी सशक्तीकरण (Empowerment of Women) के लिये एक ड्राफ्ट तैयार किया गया। इसके पश्चात् नवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में नारी–सशक्तीकरण को योजना का मुख्य उद्‌देश्य माना गया और नारी के विकास, समानता तथा राज्य तथा राष्ट्र स्तर में नारी को विशेष स्थान प्रदान किया गया। इसके पश्चात् १0 वीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में निर्धनता में कमी, प्राथमिक शिक्षा तथा साक्षरता स्तर को बढ़ाने, शिशु एवं मातृ मृत्यु दर को घटाने तथा रोजगार वृद्धि की ओर ध्यान देने की बात कही गयी।

इसी बीच वर्ष २००१ को महिला सशक्तीकरण वर्ष घोषित किया गया और राष्ट्रीय महिला सशक्तीकरण नीति (२००१) बनायी गयी इसके मुख्य आधार बिन्दु नारी का पूर्ण क्षमता विकास, सभी क्षेत्रों तथा नीति एवं निर्णय में समानता, स्वास्थ्य सम्बन्धी समान सुविधाएं, नारी के प्रति सामाजिक दृष्टिकोण में परिवर्तन, विकास की सभी धाराओं में नारी को सम्मिलित करना (Mainstreaming), महिला तथा बेटी पर किसी भी प्रकार की हिंसा एवं दुर्व्यवहार को दूर करना था।

देश का इतिहास इस बात का साक्षी है कि परतंत्रता के कारण या विदेशी साम्राज्यों के कारण शायद भारत जैसे देश में महिला के आस्तित्व को बनाये रखने के प्रति चिन्तन एवं मनन की आवश्यकता पड़ी और तभी स्वतंत्र भारत में लगभग हर पंचवर्षीय योजनाओं में महिला को विशेष ध्यान दिया गया। आज यही कारण है कि देश में पाश्चात्य संस्कृति प्रभावित नारी–सशक्तीकरण की सलिला को प्रवाहित होने के लिये स्थान दिया जा रहा है। यही नहीं नारी–सशक्तीकरण अब चर्चा में चर्चित होने का विषय भी बन रहा है, जेन्डर संवेदीकरण को अपना रहा है। आज देश वैश्वीकरण के इस युग में अपने को विश्व स्तर पर महिला–सशक्तीकरण की सहायता ले रहा है और विदेशी पाश्चात्य देशों के मानकों को अपनाने की कोशिश कर रहा है। (यू.एन.डी.पी.) ने तो नारी–सशक्तीकरण को विकास का मूलभूत अंग माना है जिससे समाज में जेन्डर–भेद तथा सामाजिक–असमानता को नष्ट कर पुरूष प्राबल्यता को समाप्त किया जाए। इस प्रकार पाश्चात्य देशों में नारी–सशक्तीकरण की अवधारणा नारी को वैयक्तिक वातावरण से सामाजिक वातावरण में लाना और उसकी अधिनस्तता को स्थिति के प्रति चुनौती देने वाली स्थिति में लाना है। परन्तु भारत के सन्दर्भ में देश के विकास में प्रतिभागिता वाली बात तो प्रासंगिक लगती है, लेकिन नारी की अधिनस्तता वाली बात कुछ अट–पटी सी लगती है। भारत के प्राचीन साहित्य में तो नारी की स्थिति सदैव सशक्त एवं पूजनीय रही है और पत्नी को पति का वाम अंग माना गया है।

कालिदास के नाटकों में विशेषकर '*विक्रमोर्वशीयम्*' और '*मालविकाग्निमित्रम्*' के सन्दर्भ में यह कहना उचित होगा कि महाकवि के इन नाटकों में नारी को एक सशक्तरूपेण नारी के रूप में लिया गया है। आज से कई ई.शा. पूर्व भी नारी का चित्रण पूर्ण रूप से सशक्त नारी के रूप में किया गया है। महाकवि कालिदास अपने नाटकों की नायिकाओं और उपनायिकाओं को किस तरह से सशक्त सिद्ध करते हैं, इसे निम्न बिन्दुओं द्वारा स्पष्ट किया जा सकता है।

१. व्यवसायिक एवं कौशलात्मक दृष्टिकोण से सशक्त – (Empowered from the point of Profession and Skills)

'मालविकाग्निमित्रम्' में महाकवि कालिदास ने रूपक का प्रारम्भ मालविका की नृत्य कला में निपुणता को लेकर ही प्रारम्भ किया है। नाटक का आरम्भ ही नायिका के नृत्य विद्या में क्षमता के प्रदर्शन के बारे में ही है। बकुलावलिका गणदास से पूछती है कि आपकी शिष्या मालविका शिक्षा लेते समय आपको कष्ट तो नही देती है? उत्तर देते हुए गणदास कहते हैं।

यद्यत्प्रयोगविषये भाविकमुपदिश्यते मया तस्यै।
तत्तद्विशेषकरणात्प्रत्युपदिशतीव मे बाला।।

(अंक प्रथम, श्लोक ५)

(मैं अभिनय के विषय में जिन–जिन भावों के प्रकाशन का उपदेश देता हूँ वे उन–उन भावों को ऐसे दिखाती हैं मानो अधिकाधिक विशेषता से प्रयुक्त कर वह मुझे सिखा रही हो)

इसके अतिरिक्त अनेक स्थानों पर जैसे श्लोक नं. ०६, अंक (९) तथा अंक २–श्लोक (९) में भी गणदास के संतुष्टि वचनों से यह स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि मालविका उनकी शिष्याओं में उत्कृष्ट थी।

पात्रविशेषे न्यस्तं गुणान्तरं व्रजति शिल्पमाधातुः।
जलमिव समुद्रशुक्तौ मुक्ताफलतां पयोदस्य।।

(अंक प्रथम श्लोक नं. – ६)

(सिखाने वाले की कला उत्तम शिष्य के पास पहुंचकर उस प्रकार

विकसित हो जाती है जैसे बादल का जल समुद्र की सीपों में पहुंचकर मोती बन उठता है)

उपदेशं विदुः शुद्धं सन्तस्तमुपदेशिनः।
श्यामायते न युष्मासु यः काञ्चनमिवाग्निषु

(अंक द्वितीय, श्लोक –९)

(जिस प्रकार आग में डालने से सोना काला नही पड़ता, वैसे ही जिस शिक्षक के सिखाने में किसी प्रकार की त्रुटि न हो, उसे ही सच्ची शिक्षा कहते हैं।)

इसके अतिरिक्त मालविका की सखी बकुलावलिका जब मालविका का श्रृंगार पैरों में आलता लागाकर करती है तो वहां पर भी एक प्रसंग आता है कि मालविका अपनी सखी से पूछती है '' **तेन प्रसाधनकलायाम–भिविनीतासि?''**

(किसने तुझे प्रसाधन कला में इतना निपुण किया?)

इस प्रसंग से ये भी प्रमाणित होता है कि उस समय की नारी केवल व्यवसायिक शिक्षा (मालविका) में ही नहीं बल्कि कौशलात्मक ज्ञान (बकुलावलिका) से भी सशक्त थीं।

२. तकनीकी ज्ञान के दृष्टिकोण से सशक्त –
(Empowered from the point of Technical Knowledge)

महाकवि कालिदास कृत 'विक्रमोर्वशीयम्' नाटक में उर्वशी और चित्रलेखा के सन्दर्भ में प्रसंग आता है कि वह तिरस्कारिणी (अन्तर्धान) विद्या से छिपकर राजा की बगल में खड़ी होकर सुनने की चेष्टा करती है और बगल में बैठे मित्र से वह क्या बाते कर रहे हैं इसको सुनती है।

''तिरस्करिणीप्रतिच्छन्ना पार्श्वगतास्य मूत्वा श्रेष्यामि तावत्
वयस्येन सह विजने किम् मन्त्रयमाणस्तिष्ठतीति।'' (द्वितीय अंक)

इसके पश्चात् पुनः एक प्रसंग आता है कि वह प्रमदवन में अपनी तिस्कारिणी शक्ति को समाप्त कर राजा के पास जाकर बोलती है ''महाराज की जय हो''।

इति तिरस्करिणीमपनीय राजानमुपसृत्य (जयतु जयतु महाराजः)

इसके अतिरिक्त उर्वशी के सन्दर्भ में प्रमदवन में ही एक प्रसंग आता है कि जहां पर उर्वशी चित्रलेखा के कहने पर, भोजपत्र को अपनी दैवीय शक्ति से उत्पन्न कर उस पर कविता लिखकर राजा के पास गिरा देती है। (उर्वशी नाटयेनाभिलिख्यक्षिपति I) (द्वितीय अंक)

३. शैक्षिक रूप से भी सशक्त –

(Educationally Empowered)

उपरोक्त सन्दर्भों से यह स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि मालविका एवं उर्वशी तथा उनकी दो नायिकाएं सखियां बकुलावलिका तथा चित्रलेखा सभी ललित कलाओं, कौशलों एवं तकनीकी ज्ञान के दृष्टिकोण से पूर्णरूपेण सशक्त थीं। शिक्षा के इस स्तर तक पहुंचने के लिये निश्चित ही उनकी बुनियादी या प्रारम्भिक शिक्षा इस प्रकार की रही होगी जो उन्हें इस स्तर तक पहुंचा सकती थी। अतः इन प्रसंगों से यह निष्कर्ष निकाला जा सकता है कि उस समय नारी–शिक्षा की सुविधएं एवं अवसर थे और वे शैक्षिक दृष्टिकोण से पूण रूपेण सशक्त थी। शिक्षा के सभी संसाधनों एवं साधनों तक उनकी पहुंच थी और किसी प्रकार जेन्डर विभेदीकरण या असमानता की समस्या उस समय नहीं थी।

४. प्रबन्धन क्षमता एवं प्रशासनिक क्षमता के दृष्टिकोण से सशक्त –(Empowered from the point of Management and Excutive Capacity)

'मालविकाग्निमित्रम्' नामक नाटक में कई जगह ऐसे प्रसंग मिलते हैं जहां पर रानी को निर्णय लेने तथा आदेश देने की पूर्ण स्वतंत्रता है जैसे – रानी के पैर में चोट लग जाने से वह अपने अधिकार को हन्तातारित करती है और मालविका से अशोक के वृक्ष के दोहन के लिये कहती है।

''हला उत्तिष्ठ। अशोकविकासयितृकं देव्या नियोगमनुतिष्ठ।''

(सखी उठो, अशोक को विकसित करने वाली देवी के आदेश का पालन करो)

इसके अतिरिक्त जब रानी को राजा और मालविका के प्रणय प्रसंग की जानकारी मिलती है तो भी वह उसे बन्दी बना देने का ओदश देती है।

५. मनोवैज्ञानिक दृष्किोण से सशक्तीकरण –

(Empowered from the point of psychology)

मनोविज्ञान, व्यक्ति के व्यवहारों के माध्यम से उसके व्यक्तित्व के विषय में सूचना प्रदान करता है। अनेक प्रकार की परिस्थितियों में, व्यक्ति के विषम प्रकार के व्यवहार प्रदर्शन से,उसके आन्तरिक मन अथवा आन्तरिक व्यक्तित्व के बारे में जानकारी मिलती है। महाकवि कालिदासकृत 'मालविकाग्निमित्रम्' तथा 'विक्रमोर्वशीयम्' नामक नाटकों में अनेकों ऐसे प्रसंग मिलते हैं जहां पर उर्मिला, मालविका उनकी सखियां तथा रानियों के ऐसे व्यवहार हैं जो उन्हें मनोवैज्ञानिकरूप से सशक्त सिद्ध करते हैं।

'विक्रमोर्वशीयम्' में अंक तीन के अर्न्तगत एक प्रसंग आता है जब निपुणिका (रानी) प्रियानुप्रसाद नामक (पति प्रसन्न करने वाला व्रत) व्रत करती है और राजा के पूछने पर व्रत का आशय बताते हुए कहती है –

अद्यप्रभृति आर्यपुत्रो यां स्त्रियं कामयते, या आर्यपुत्रसमागम – प्रणयिनी तया सहाप्रतिबन्धेन वर्तितव्यम्।

(जिस स्त्री को आर्यपुत्र चाहेगें या जो स्त्री आर्यपुत्र का समागम चाहेगी उसके प्रति आज से मैं स्नेह का आचरण करूंगी।)

मूर्ख! अहं खलु आत्मनः सुखावसानेनार्यपुत्रस्य सुखमिच्छामि। एतावता चिन्तय तावत् प्रियो नवेति।)

(हे मूर्ख! मैं अपने सुख का नाश करके भी आर्यपुत्र को सुखी करने की उत्सुक हूँ। इसी से सोच लो कि (वे मुझे) प्रिय हैं या नहीं)

इसके अतिरिक्त मालवकिाग्निमित्रम् में भी प्रसंग मिलता है कि मालविका अपनी सखी बकुलावलिका से कहती है कि मुझे तो देवी (रानी) ने इस अशोक का दोहन करने के लिये कहा है। उपरोक्त प्रसंगों से विदित होता है कि कालिदास की नायिकाओं द्वारा कर्त्तव्य पालन, बड़ों के आदेश

का पालन करना इत्यादि अच्छे व्यवहारों को आत्मसात् किया जाता था।

इन सभी प्रसंगों से यह भी स्पष्ट होता है कि महाकवि कालिदास की सभी नारी–पात्र अपने कर्त्तव्यों के प्रति अत्यन्त उत्तरदायित्व की भावना रखती थीं, त्याग और सहनशीलता की पुजारी थीं। मनोवैज्ञानिक रूप से पूर्णतया संतुलित,सुसमायोजित एवं परिपक्व व्यवहार के दृष्किोण से भी महाकवि कालिदास के नाटकों की नायिकाएं सशक्त थीं।

६. जैव–वैज्ञानिक सशक्तीकरण –

(Biologically Empowered)

जैव वैज्ञानिक क्षमता व्यक्ति की एक नैसर्गिक क्षमता है। महाकवि कालिदास ने ईसा से पूर्व युग में भी इसके महत्व को अंकित किया है। मालविकाग्निमित्रम् में एक प्रसंग है जहां राजा,मालविका से कहते हैं कि –

धृतिपुष्पमयमपि जनो बध्नाति न तादृशं चिरात्प्रभृति।
स्पर्शामृतेन पूरय दोहदमस्याप्यनन्यरूचेः।।

(अंक तृतीय, श्लोक – १९)

(यह व्यक्ति चिरकाल से धैर्य सुमन को धारण नहीं कर सका है अतः अनन्यासक्त इस जन का मनोरथ भी चरणस्पर्श रूप अमृत से पूर्ण कर दो।)

आज हम नारी की इस जैव–वैज्ञानिक नैसर्गिक क्षमता की अवहेलना कर भ्रूण हत्या या बालिका हत्या की अनेक घटनाएं सुनते हैं। महाकवि कालिदास ने अपनी नायिका को धरती मां की तरह महत्वपूर्ण समझकर इस सृष्टि की रचना का एक अभिन्न अंग माना है। जीव–विज्ञान में अन्वेषण के फलस्वरूप हम यह मानते हैं कि नर (पुरूष) और मादा (स्त्री) के हेप्लायड कोशिकाओं के मिलन के उपरान्त ही युग्मक (Zyogote) का निर्माण होता है जिससे सृष्टि की रचना जीव के रूप में होती है। अतः इस पृथ्वी पर नर और नारी दोनों की ही सृष्टि रचना के लिये बराबर के भागीदार हैं। महाकवि ने अपने नाटकों में नारी को जैव–वैज्ञानिक दृष्टि से भी सशक्त सिद्ध करने का प्रयास किया है।

७. आर्थिक सशक्तीकरण –

(Economic Empowerment)

उपरोक्त छः आयामों में सशक्तीकरण से स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि नारी को अलग से आर्थिक रूप से सशक्तीकरण की कोई आवश्यकता ही नहीं रह जाती जब नारी उपरोक्त आयामों में सशक्तीकृत हो जाये। अगर नारी उपरोक्त संदर्भों में सशक्तीकृत है तो वह आर्थिक रूप से भी सशक्तीकृत होगी।

इस प्रकार महाकवि कालिदास के दो नाटकों विक्रमोर्वशीयम् तथा मालविकाग्निमित्रम् के आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि कालिदास के सभी नारी–पात्र विभिन्न दृष्टिकोण से सशक्त थे। अतः भारत के सन्दर्भ में जहां शिव भी शक्ति के बिना शव रह जाते हैं, जहां शक्ति को पूजा जाता है और जहां पर शक्ति के विभिन्न रूपों को नौ देवियों के रूप में नौ दिन तक पूजा जाता है, वहां पर निश्चित ही हमें नारी–सशक्तीकरण की परिभाषा को, अपने वैदिक एवं प्राचीन साहित्य का पुनरावलोकन कर परिवर्तित एवं परिमार्जित करना होगा। साथ ही देश की पाश्चात्य संस्कृति से प्रभावित, दिशा भ्रमित शक्तियों को अपने देश की संस्कृति एवं सभ्यता के माध्यम से सशक्त करना होगा।

'सन्दर्भ – ग्रन्थ'

1. विक्रमोर्वशीयम् – रामाभिलाषत्रिपाठी (व्याख्याकार)
मोती लाल बनारसीदास, दिल्ली

2. मालविकाग्निमित्रम् – रमाशंकर पाण्डेय
चौखम्बा सुरभारती प्रकाशन वाराणसी

स्त्री अधिकारों के परिप्रक्ष्य में कालिदास के आदर्श स्त्रीपात्र

सुश्री आचार्या सूर्या देवी चतुर्वेदी

पुरा कवीनां गणनाप्रसंगे कनिष्ठिकाधिष्ठितकालिदासः।
अद्यापि तत्तुल्यकवेरभावादनामिका सार्थवती बभूवः।।

इस अद्वितीय ख्याति को प्राप्त दिग्दिगन्त की कीर्ति कौमुदी को बटोरने वाले माघ, भारवि, श्रीहर्ष, दण्डी, भास, भवभूति आदि कवियों को पार्श्व में करते हुए सत्यम्, शिवम्, सुन्दरम् के लालित्य लावण्य से आश्लिष्ट रचनाकार कविकुल शिरोमणि साहित्य विभूति कालिदास वे कवि हैं जिनकी समता सन्देहास्पद है। कालिदास के काव्य व नाटक ऐसे हृद्यस्वरों से अनस्यूत हैं जो सरलता, सुन्दरता, धर्म कर्म की प्रेरणा के प्रहरी प्रतिभासित होते हैं। कालिदास की रचना सप्राण हृदयावर्जक है।

व्याकरण से परिष्कृत वैदर्भी रीति तथा प्रसाद गुण से ओतप्रोत सरल सुबोध कालिदास की भाषा कथ्य को सत्य में परिणत करने में समर्थ है। उनकी कृति के सौन्दर्य को निखारने वाले पर्वतों में हिमालय, नगरों में उज्जयिनी, देवताओं में शिव, छन्दों मे मन्दाक्रान्ता, अलंकार में उपमा, ऋतु में वसन्त और रसों में श्रृंगार है। कवि की श्रृगार प्रधानता व प्रियता राजशेखर ने **'एको न जीयते हन्त कालिदासो न केनचित्। श्रृंगार ललितोत्गारे कालिदासत्रयी नु किम्''** इन शब्दों में व्यक्त की है।

श्रृंगार रस वस्तुतः तो एक–दूसरे के सामीप्य एवं मनःस्थितियों को समझने के भाव का अभिद्योतक है, पर जिस भावप्रवणता में यह जाना, समझा जाता है, वह ब्रह्मचर्यादि तीनों आश्रमों सहित गृहस्थ आश्रम के लिये भी विष तुल्य है। कवि कालिदास ने 'अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्' में ऋषियों को भी आन्दोलित करने वाले इस श्रृंगार गरल की सरिता में स्नात तात्कालिक राजाओं की वासनात्व प्रवृत्ति को जहाँ उद्घाटित किया है, वहीं शुद्धा, सरला नारी चरित्र की सम्मानपूर्वक प्रतिष्ठा की है।

मदनतृषित चलचित्त राजा दुष्यन्त जब निःसर्ग सुन्दरी ऋषिकन्या के कन्यात्व हरण का विस्मरण व परित्याग का दुःसाहस करता हुआ वक्रोक्तिपूर्वक स्त्रियों के प्रति अनादरसूचक परवञ्चना प्रवीण आदि कटुशब्दों द्वारा मातृभूता तापसी गौतमी को तिरस्कृत करता है। उस दृश्य में नारीशक्तिपूजक कवि ने नारी के विशाल उज्जवल चरित्र को अंकित किया है। उस सुचरित की भूमिका में राजा के तिरस्कार को गौतमी अपने तपस्या समुद्र में निःशब्द समाहित कर लेती है। परित्यक्ता अपमानित शकुन्तला नारी की 'पृथिवी' उपाधि को सार्थक करती हुई पति वियोग से उद्वेलित दुष्यन्त के धिक्करण को अन्तःस्रावी आँसुओं में पी जाती है। किसी अभियोग अदालत में नहीं जाती, न ही मानवाधिकार का सहारा लेती। ऋषि कुल से आई पुनः ऋषिकुल पहुँच जाती है।

पुनः कुशाग्र कवि ने नारी के इस अपमान का मूल्य शकुन्तला के पैरों में पड़कर राजा दुष्यन्त द्वारा क्षमा याचना मंगवाकर नारी के धैर्य, शील, शुद्धता की स्थापना द्वारा चुकाया है तथा नारी अधिकारों को सुदृढ़ किया है। पति द्वारा क्षमा याचना करने पर **'शुश्रूष्व गुरून'** अंक . 4/17, आदि पिता की पञ्च शिक्षाओं में खरी उतरी शकुन्तला द्वारा **'नूनं मे सुचरितप्रतिबन्धकं पुराकृतं तेषु दिवसेषु परिणाममुखमासीत्'**, अंक 7, अर्थात् निश्चय ही पुण्यकर्म का अवरोध पूर्वजन्म में किया हुआ मेरा पाप ही उदित हुआ था, जिससे सहृदय आप निर्दय हुए, यह कहला कर मातृरूपा नारी जाति के गौरव गरिमा का संवर्धन किया है।

प्रियंवदा, अनुसूया का चरित्र भी महान् है। उन्होंने अपने स्वार्थ व सौन्दर्य की बाधा को नगण्य कर सुन्दरी शकुन्तला के कल्याण को सर्वोपरि समझा और राजा दुष्यन्त से उसका सम्बन्ध कराने के लिये पूरी चतुराई के साथ प्रयत्न किया। शकुन्तला के सुखी जीवने के लिये **'बहुवल्लभाः राजानः'** कहकर राजा को सचेष्ट भी किया। सब कुछ होते हुए भी उस गरल से अपने को अछूता रखा।

इस प्रकार दृढ़, शुद्ध, शालीन, चरित्रवाले अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्

के शकुन्तला, अनुसूया, प्रियंवदा, माता तापसी गौतमी इन स्त्री पात्रों की आदर्श भूमिका वर्तमान में पारिवारिक कच्ची दीवार की भाँति ढहे हुए स्नेहों को सशक्त बनाने में पूर्ण सक्षम है। यह कहा जा सकता है कि कवि कालिदास के नाटकों के स्त्रीपात्र जो स्त्री अधिकारों को सुरक्षित किये हुए हैं, वे आधुनिक कन्याओं के लिये सुचरित, गम्भीरता, धीरता, शालीनता के पथ प्रदर्शक बन सकते हैं। समाज में व्याप्त दुराचार के अपवारण में सहायक हो सकते हैं।

कालिदास – साहित्ये स्त्रीपात्राणि

डा. कमला पाण्डेय

साहित्यस्य यावन्ति पृष्ठानि परीवर्त्येरन् तावत्सु कामिनी–रूपाणि नित्यवैविधीं कलयन्ति संलक्ष्यन्ते। बहुत्र न पर्याप्नोति कवि–प्रतिभा तदाङ्कने। तथाहि निवेदितं हिन्दीमहाकवि – बिहारिणा–

लिखन बैठि जाकी सबी, गहि गहि गरब गरूर
भए न केते जगत के, चतुर चितेरे कूर।

(बिहारी सतसई – 347)

अथ कवयित्रा समं विधुरतां विधातुरपि वर्णयति महाकविकालिदासः कवतेऽसौ पार्वती – सन्दर्भतः–

वृत्तानुपूर्वे च न चातिदीर्घे जङ्घे शुभे सृष्टवतस्तदीये
शेषाङ्गनिर्माणविधौ विधातुर्लावण्य उत्पाद्य इवास यत्नः।

कुमार. 1/35

अत्र तदीयजङ्घयोः[1] सर्वांकषत्वं विवृण्वता कविना शुभे इति विशेषणेन तयोः पावनत्वं कान्तिमत्वञ्च विशिष्य संकेतितम्। परवर्ति–विश्वकवीनां कान्तिमत्यो नायिकाः (ब्रिलियण्ट हिरोइंस) नैकवारं चर्चापदवीमुपयाताः। मन्ये स एवायं कान्तिगुणो योषिदलङ्कारेषु नाट्यशास्त्रेऽपि प्रमुखतया परिगणितः[2] पार्वतीप्रभृतिनायिकाचित्रेषु[3] चकास्ति। तथा हि मङ्गलस्नान–विशुद्धगात्री शैलसुता ''प्रफुल्लकाशा वसुधेव रेजे''[4] परिणयमण्डपोन्मुखी च सा–

क्षीरोदवेलेव सफेनापुञ्जा पर्याप्तचन्द्रेव शरत्–त्रियामा
नवं नवक्षौमनिवासिनी सा भूयो बभौ दर्पणमादधाना।

(कुमार 7/26)

उर्वश्या असाधारणीं रूपदीप्तिं निबध्नन्नेष कविः पद्मयोनेर्विधातुः स्थानान्तरणमेव कल्पयति वक्ति च–

अस्याः सर्गविधौ प्रजापतिरभूच्चन्द्रो नु कान्तिप्रदः

श्रृङ्गारैकरसः स्वयं नु मदनो मासो नु पुष्पाकरः।

(विक्र. 1/10)

चन्द्रः कामः कुसुमाकरो वा ईदृशीं कान्तिमनोहरामाकृतिं रचयितुमीष्टे नासौ जटापाठपरायणो जरठमेधाजडो वेधाः। शकुन्तला ''प्रभातरला''[5] इन्दुमती चामुना ''सञ्चारिणी दीपशिखेव'' चित्रितं[6] न केवलं सामान्यपरि–स्थितौ बहुकृत्वा विषादवातावरणेऽपि नेमाः स्निग्ध– रुचिवैशिष्ट्यं विरहयन्ति। मेघदूते मूर्तिमती विरहभावनेव यक्षी दुःस्थिता सती–

हस्तन्यस्तं मुखमसकलव्यक्तिलम्बालकत्वा–
दिन्दोर्दैन्यं त्वदनुसरणक्लिष्टकान्तेर्बिभर्ति।

(मेघदूतम् (उ.) / 21)

जलदमालिकाभिरंशतः करम्बितकान्तिना विधुमण्डलेन सोपमिता। अंगनानां मुखच्छविसनाभीनि भुजान्तराल–वलित्रयोरू–नखादीन्यपि[7] कविना सदृशच्छविशालीनि वर्णितानि।

अतिरिच्य खल्वेतान् बहिरङ्गरूपविन्यासान् कालिदासीयनायिकाः सद्यः पातिभिः[8] संवेदितान्तःकरणैः पृथक् परिचयरेखामर्हन्ति। तथा हि शापविरहितां यक्षवधूटी चकितहरिणीप्रेक्षणा, उष्णैरश्रुभी रात्रीर्यापयन्ती मेघाच्छन्नवासरे स्थलमलिनीव चालिखिताऽस्ति।[9] यक्षः सन्देशहरमनु–रून्धे –

तस्मिन् काले जलद! यदि सा लब्धनिद्रासुखास्या–
दन्वास्यैनां स्तनितविमुखो याममात्रं सहस्व।
मा भूदस्याः प्रणयिनि मयि स्वप्नलब्धे कथञ्चित्
सद्यः कण्ठच्युतभुजलताग्रन्थि गाढोपगूढम्।[10]

नारीमनोविज्ञानविदुरेण कविना प्रथमप्रहरभग्ननिद्रा मण्डलितबाहुलता स्वप्नकैतवं शैलजाऽपि सदृशतया सञ्चित्रिता।[11]

विविधसन्दर्भसोपानेषु योषितां मनःप्रचला भावशबलता यथानिपुणं निरूप्यते कालिदासेन तथा न कैश्चनान्यैः कवीन्द्रब्रुवैः। तपोवनसंस्कारिता प्रणयोन्मेषविसंष्ठुला शकुन्तला स्यात्[12] किंवा प्रथमतया शिवं वीक्ष्य

मध्या च पद्मिनी नायिका शकुन्तला[23], चित्रिण्यः क्रमशो मुग्धामध्या–प्रगल्भाश्च राजन्ते मालविकायक्षदयितोर्वश्यः।[24] अत्र चैकोनविंशरघुवंशकोण एवं शङ्खिनीहस्तिन्यावपि सामि दृश्येते।

अपि विस्तारिणि काव्यफलके सहजतया पल्लवितानां नायिकाऽव–स्थानां बहूनि दुर्लभचित्राणि सन्ति विलसन्ति, यथा – विलोचनेन्दीवरवारि–बिन्दुभिर्निषिक्तबिम्बाधरचारूपल्लवाः[25] प्रोषितभर्तृकाः, अल्पाभरणभूषिता नीलांशुकपरिग्रहा रभसाभिसारिकाः[26], क्रोधभिन्नवलयैर्विवर्तनैः प्रच्छदान्तं क्लेदयन्त्यः खण्डिताश्च।[27]

हन्त, नारीणां का न वैविधी प्रतिनिहिता कालिदासेन! इह वल्गति मदविह्वला स्खलितवागिरावती[28], प्रणयिनं निगडयति रशनाभी रतिः[29], परामृशति चरणाभ्यामुर्वशी[30], स्वदते सुरभिमृत्तिकां शनैरन्तः सत्त्वा सुदक्षिणा[31], वत्सलमातृत्वमनुरून्धे गौतमी, सेर्ष्या तातप्यते ज्येष्ठा धारिणी, बिडालगृहीतेव परभृतिका सीदति कनिष्ठा मालविका[32], कुट्टिनीव कलयति कूटं परिव्राजिका कौशिकी, सेवन्ते दारिकाः[33], सञ्चरन्ति दूतिकाः, परिहसन्ति निर्व्याजं प्रियंवदादिक–सख्यः।

निष्कर्षतः ''सृष्टिराद्येव धातुः''[34] कामिनीयं कालिदासेन कमनीया–कृतिपरम्पराभिः सुतरां प्रमाणिता।

''वेपथुमती सरसाङ्गयष्टिर्निक्षेपणाय पदमुद्धृतमुद्वहन्ती, मार्गाचल–व्यतिकारा – कुलितेव सिन्धुः शैलाधिराजतनया स्यान्नेदृशः[13] परत्र लक्ष्यते भावसम्भेदः। जानाति स एवं शोकाश्रूणामुष्णत्वं शिशिरत्वञ्च प्रमोदवाष्पाणाम्। सभ्रातृकलत्रस्य रामस्य साकेतप्रत्यागमने कौशल्या–सुमित्रयोः परमशबला– मौपम्यकरम्बितां संवेदनामंकयति महाकविः –

आनन्दजः शोकजमश्रु बाष्पस्तयोरशीतं शिशिरो बिभेद।
गङ्गासरय्वोर्जलमुष्णतप्तं हिमाद्रिनिष्यन्द इवावतीर्णः।।

(रघु. 14/3)

सत्यम्, विशुद्धतमान्यन्तःकरणान्येव सद्यः संवेदनस्पन्दमनुभवन्ति यत्कृते कालिदाससाहित्ये भूयांसि नारीपात्राण्यपि तपोविशेषमहिम्ना परिष्कारोन्मुख– वृत्तीनि वर्णितानि। तपोभिरवन्ध्यरूपतां कामयमानां[14] पार्वती, तपसे सूर्यनिविष्टदृष्टिर्जानकी[15], वसने परिधूसरे वसाना नियमक्षाममुखी धृतैकवेणिः शकुन्तला[16] तादृश्य एव समुज्ज्वलतेजो–निर्झारिण्यः सन्ति। वृथैव दीनसमीक्षकैरासां पुरतः समानीयन्ते तुलाकोटिभिरुच्छाल्यमाना ईव–हेलन्–डीडो–मिराण्डा प्रभृतयः पाश्चात्त्य–कामकरण्डकाः।

अलंकलक्ष्मीरिव[17] भारतीया नारी सहचरी[18] सहधर्मचारिणी[19] च भवति। नूनमजमुखतो विपन्नायामिन्दुमत्यां कश्चन राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतिस्वरः श्रूयते –

गृहिणी सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ।
करूणाविमुखेन मृत्युना हरता त्वां वद किन्न मे हृतम्?।।

(8/67)

सर्वं विशेषणजातमतिरिच्य किन्न मे हृतमिति वचो नार्या अनिर्वचनीय–महिमानं द्योतयति, यं पुनः स्पष्टया व्यनक्ति विरही यक्षः – तां जानीथाः परिमितकथां जीवितं मे द्वितीयमिति।[20]

सप्ततन्तुसम्मिते कालिदासीयसाहित्यमण्डपे विविधवृत्तसमन्विता मंगलमुखरिताः सुवासिन्यो विलसन्ति। मुग्धे पद्मिन्यौ सीता[21]– पार्वत्यौ[22]

संदर्भ ग्रन्थ

[1] कुमारसम्भवम् 1/49, मालविकाग्निमित्रम् 2/13, विक्रमोर्वशीयम् 1/10, अभिज्ञान–शकुन्तलम् 2/10, प्रभृतिपद्येषु।

[2] दशरूपकम् 2/30–42

[3] कुमार. 1/24, 25, 43

[4] तत्रैव 7/11

[5] अभिज्ञान. 1/23

[6] रघुवंशम् 6/67

[7] कुमार. 1/33–42, ऋतुसंहारम् 2/26, रघु. 16/63, मालविका. 3/11–12, विक्रम. 2/7 पुरस्सरस्थलेषु।

[8] मेघ. (पू.) / 10

[9] तत्रैव (उ.) /19, 26–27

[10] तत्रैव 34

[11] कुमार. 5/57

[12] अहिणवकुससूइपरिक्खदं मे चलणं। कुरूवअ–साहापरिलग्गं च मे वक्कलं। (बी.एच्.यू. कालिदासग्रन्थावल्याः 445 पृष्ठाङ्के)

[13] कुमार. 5/85

[14] कुमार. 5/2

[15] रघु. 14/66

[16] अभिज्ञान. 7/21

[17] रघु. 6/43

[18] विक्रम. 4/32

[19] विक्रम. पृ. 421

[20] मेघ. (उ.) /20

[21] रघु. 14/59–67

[22] कुमार. 8/2
[23] अभिज्ञान. 1/18, 21, 27
[24] मालविका. 2/3, मेघ. (उ.) 23, विक्रम. 1/7
[25] ऋतु. 2/12, मेघ. (उ.) /21–34
[26] विक्रम. पृ. 374, कुमार. 4/11, ऋतु. 2/10, मेघ. (पू.) /37
[27] रघु. 19/22
[28] मालविका. पृ. 290, रघु. 19/12, कुमार. 4/12, 8/77–80, ऋतु. 6/32–33
[29] कुमार. 4/8, रघु. 19/17
[30] विक्रम. 4/39, कुमार. 4/17, 7/19, अभिज्ञान. पृ. 554
[31] रघु. 3/3–4
[32] जो बिडालगहीदाए परहुदिआए। मालविका. पृ. 300
[33] मालविका. पृ. 306, विक्रम. पृ. 380
[34] मेघ. (उ.) /19

Kalidasa's Portrayal of Women : From Passivity to Strength

Dr.Anvita Sharma

In passing judgment on womanhood more specifically the women and leading women characters that Kalidas created, one is tempted to generalize them as being bestowed with two universally applicable feminine qualities. They possess beauty in accordance to the prevailing conventions, which seem to transcend time and space. They seem to play a passive role in the events affecting them and their immediate contextual environment. A closer scrutiny however, of the important women in Kalidasa's literature reveal qualities that are not restricted to the parameters of conventional beauty and the traditional feminine passivity ascribed to them.

One pertinent quality of the women, which rightfully assigns to them the status to act as role models, to the contemporary global women, is their underlying strength as evidenced in their capacity to take decisions, reasonably sound, whenever the occasions so merit. This strength takes different forms.

In the 19th shloka of the 5th sarga in *Kumarsambhavam*,

क्लमं ययौ कन्दुकलीलयापि या तया मुनीनां चरितं व्यगाह्यत।

ध्रुवं वपुः काञ्चनपद्मनिर्मित मृदु प्रकृत्या च ससारमेव च॥19॥

The intense sincerity of purpose and the accompanying rigorous tapas being undertaken by Parvati to achieve the desired goal is amply underscored.

In the 36th shloka of the 5th sarga in *Kumarsambhavam*, we find Lord Shiva visibly moved to such an extent by Parvati's tapas that he proclaims :

तथा हिते शीलमुदारदर्शने! तपस्विनामंप्युपदेशतां गतम्।

Parvati's strength is compared to that of a detached yet determined sage in deep meditation. Parvati through her penance has set an example unto the sages themselves.

In the 86th shloka of the 5th sarga of *Kumarsambhavam* :

अद्य प्रभृत्यवनताङ्गि तवास्मि दासः
क्रीतस्तपोभिरिति वादिनी चन्द्रमौलौ ।

we find Lord Shiva conceding ground to Parvati's stance and he admits that Parvati through her efforts had won him over completely. This shloka reflects the adamantine essence noticeable in Parvati's personality.

The truly striking heroines in Kalidasa's portrayals are the ones who have the qualities of either a Draupadi or a Sita, or a touch of both. There is a noticeable difference between the great heroines of the epics, especially the Mahabharata, and of the later Kavyas in particular the plays. The earlier epic heroines usually fight and win their battles through their quick wit and verbal skills. They remind one of Draupadi. The Kavya heroines are much more like Sita, the heroine of the *adikavya*, in their quieter wielding of power. But the two literary forms of the epic and Kavya are different. The oral creation and performance of an epic demand a style which is straightforward. The Kavyas, mainly concerned with the communication of the worldly bhavas, the emotions, or in the more universal form of their essence, rasas, need characters which are drawn with much more attention to subtle details of characterization.

The two Shakuntalas are good examples of this change in characterization of a heroine. The Shakuntala of the Mahabharata stands her ground and speaks up for her right. Kalidasa's Shakuntala does try to argue her words which we remember. It is her quiet suffering and her refusal to beg for kindness from the king which lends her an aura of victorious strength when she appears in the last act.

Moving on to other aspect of Shakuntala's character we find the portrayal of her strengths which are compellingly revealed in the 21st shloka in the last act of *Shakuntalam:*

वसने परिधूसरे वसाना नियमक्षाममुखी धृतैकवेणिः।
अतिनि करूणस्य शुद्धशीला मम दीर्घ विरहव्रतं बिभर्ति ।।

Dushyant had to take note of the austerities undertaken by Shakuntla which had made her emerge stronger. Both Parvati and

Shakuntala make their impact more through silence than verbosity.

Shakuntala's character as portrayed in the last act is no longer that of a pathetic, abandoned young bride. She comes on the stage with concern for her son whose amulet has not protected him against the touch of an apparent stranger. She is not quite prepared to believe that her suffering may be over.

In the beautiful scene between Shakuntala and Dushayanta when the king falls at her feet begging for her forgiveness she refuses to blame her husband. Shakuntala says that her suffering was most probably caused by her own past evil deeds and not through any fault of her husband. Through these qualities she retains our sympathy and also keeps up the suspense of the plot.

Moving on to Kalidasa's Sita we find that she exhibited the quality of being more vocal compared to Valmiki's Sita. In the 14th sarga of *Raghuvansham* :

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्रू।।

We find Sita reminding Laxmana that the king had himself found her pure on her Agni Pariksha, yet bowing to pressures of public opinion she was being banished to exile.She reminds Laxman of Rama's action being incompatible to the king's *Kula*. She asks Laxman that she may be accorded protection which constitutes the legal right of bona-fide subject. She asserts that she was making this demand as the right due to a subject and that it may not be construed as the entreaties of a wife to her husband.

Heroines in Kalidasa's literature, in spite of first impressions to the contrary, are neither passive nor weak and definitely not oppressed. In the 57th shloka of the 19th sarga we witness the coronation of the wife of the deceased king Agnivarna. She was deemed fit to rule according to the counsel given by ministers and confidants in consultation with the prominent citizenry, and in accordance to democratic principles and prevalent norms.

मौलैः सार्ध स्थविरसचिवैर्हेमसिंहासनस्था

राज्ञी राज्यं विधिवदशिषद् भर्तुरव्याहताज्ञा ।। 57 ।।

Another very important character portrayed by Kalidasa in the *Raghuvansham* is that of Indumati the wife of King Aja. In the 56th shloka of the 8th sarga we find a despondent king bemoaning the death of Indumati who is his homemaker, counselor, friend and a disciple in the field music arts.

गृहिणी । सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ ।

What one remembers and admires in Kalidasa's portrayal of his heroines such as Parvati, Shakuntala, Sita and Indumati is not their beauty of submissiveness but their patient forbearance as weapons to deal with their predicaments.

The women were dominated by their love for their husbands, and they were alike in their patience and gentle use of strength. None of them gets to know the outcome of her struggles. The uncertainty, together with their quietly active roles and the ability to face their problems with sorrowful but tenacious courage without giving up hope, undoubtedly make the heroines of Kalidasa worth of being emulated as role models.

We must also spare a thought to the fact that a nation without certain traditions is incomprehensible, and on comparing the women characters to the male counterparts in that era, a discerning eye will not fail to record that after all, the Pandavas, the Kauravas, Rama, and the heroes of the Kavyas, acting in a larger arena, were just as bound by social customs and resigned as their feminine counterparts.

Priyamvada: A Role Model for Women's Empowerment

Dr. Mrs. S.Siddhartha

Empowerment of women is a global concept, which has gained recognition in India in the past century. Observance of Women's day on March 8, is to pin point the related issues of women. Empowerment is the process of making women aware of their rights and privileges. Why has it become necessary for women to be made aware of all this? For this we have to take a journey into the past. We see that over the years the woman has become disempowered.

When there is an imbalance in the society, between the rich and the poor, between the haves and the have-nots, between men and women, between children and adults, the all-round progress of the society is hampered. This unfortunate situation continues till some intellectuals or philanthropists put in their effort to redeem the state of affairs. Women's deteriorating position in the society is one such problem. Besides the biological reasons, geographical, historical, social and political reasons also contribute to the subjugation, victimization and general abuse of the woman. Most of the countries of the world are experiencing this discrimination against women. In ancient India, in the Vedic times, perhaps, the women were better off.

Buddhism and other religio-reform movements did try to elevate the status of the Indian women. During the British period, a number of people and organizations became active in women's issues. Some important organizations and people were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Theosophical Society and Annie Besant.

They succeeded to an extent. But the harm done was so deep that it needed a sustained sensitive and sympathetic remedy. In this context I quote a sentence of a historian, which is true but very disturbing. There the women lay, condemned to a lifelong prison, her naturally keen senses dulled through inaction, without light of knowledge, to illumine her vision, steeped in ignorance and prejudice,

groping in the dark, a martyr to the conventions of the society in which she had been born. Inferior status of women in society was made sacrosanct by religious ordinances. There was a time when the education of girls had not only no supporters, but also had people, who openly were inimical to the idea. The Indraprastha Hindu girls high school near Jama Masjid and then Indraprastha College were established with great difficulty, at the call of Annie Besant.

Question is "So, why not a role-model from our own history,instead of an imaginary character from the mind of Kalidasa?"

It is true that Indian History recorded instances of outstanding women like Gargi, Chandbibi, Nurjahan, Raziya Begum, Jhansi ki Rani, Mirabai, Ahalyabai etc.; who accomplished great feats in the spheres of literature, art, philosophy, administration and even warfare. But these women sprang from the governing privileged strata of society, and were therefore, free from conditions of social subjection in which the Indian women, in the mass, lived and who had, therefore, neither freedom nor opportunity for the development of 'Self Expression.' They were uneducated. And widespread poverty of the majority of the Indian population was one of the fundamental obstacles in remedying this.

The struggle for independence made an impact. Adversity brought advantages. Women entered politics and became leaders – Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy. They were from rich families, yet it did mark a beginning. It helped break the ice. Slowly the women of the lower strata, inspite of the handicap of illiteracy and poverty, were steadily growing conscious of their rights. They became members of Kisan Sabhas, trade unions and other political groups.

This is the past. But the situation in the present is quite depressing. Though girls study, get into jobs, become lecturers, or join IT, get fat salaries, yet the social pressures are still there. Marriage is a must. Our society being patriarchal, she goes to the in-law's house and is set on fire. Why?

Laws have been enacted, but who will implement it? Old psychological habit-patterns persist although the legal obstacle is removed. The would-be victims, the disempowered ones have to take the initiative. But self-motivation is not easy for people steeped deep into the quagmire. Hence the need for role models. Usually mothers are role models. But only if she is liberated and powerful, will empowerment come.

Surprisingly, parents are the impediments in the empowerment of the girl child. How?

a) Poor parents are afraid.
b) Rich parents make them slaves of westernization.
c) Middle class parents give more importance to male children.

Whether it be the village, the city or the multistoreyed residential apartments – girl from each section has problems, pressure from outside, family or peer group. So she has to be empowered from inside.

Empowerment is a positive concept.

It does not mean disruption of old values.
It does not mean westernization.
It does not mean freedom without fence.

And, Empowerment is a means, not an end. It equips the girl with power, for her to realize and achieve her full potential.Ideally 'empowerment' for woman should mean the freedom to take decisions for herself after due discussions and deliberations, with others.

If a woman decides 'to care for the needs of her family', instead of choosing 'a career advancement', it should not be branded as 'disempowerment'. Fifty years back, woman coming out of the homes to take up careers-indicated liberation and freedom and power. Since social values are related to the economic, emotional and political need of the society, they are found to change with time. This is an inevitable process and a necessary one at that, because, an unchanging society is a dying society.

The problems cropping up in a changing society, differ with time. Also since all women are not the same, role-models can also not be the same. But there are set values and characteristics basic to an empowered women, to emulate which, you need a role-model. A girl in ashrama representing the hoary past of Indian can also be a role model. So the present generation, whether it be of the lower strata or the middle class or the elite section, have clear-cut messages to receive and absorb, from Priyamvada of Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam.*

So when I choose Priyamvada as the role model for women's empowerment, the significance and relevance is with reference to a particular lacuna that I perceive in the development of girl-child, in the present day society of this twenty-first century.

In the Ashrama of Kalidasa's days they had a normal life, each doing one's own duty but without the urban crowd and pollution of the cities. A girl of today can easily correlate with Priyamvada, inspite of wearing jeans, speaking English and rocking with the pop music. Priyamvada too was well-educated and wanting to be given away in marriage. (*Ime api Pradeye. Tvaya saha gautami yasyati*)

Empowerment lies in turning the necessity to your advantage. Do not take marriage as the end line. Anasuya and Priyamvada, though placed in the rural setting, never neglected themselves, physically or mentally. Dushyanta's remark shows that the three girls were well-groomed and challenge to the urban elite. He says – *Shuddhantadurlabhamidam vapuh ashramavasino yadi janasya, doorikrtah khalu gunairudyanalata vanalatabhih.*

Management giants like Deepak Chopara and Harish Khare and Dale Carnegie and host of others, again and again emphasize that there is unlimited ability inside every individual. We need to tap it and bring it out, Mantra is –"Do what you can, then move to what is possible and, before you know, the impossible will also be done". Priyamvada conceded that she did not know about jewellery, but was ready to experiment, from what they had observed in books etc.

Abharanocitam roopam ashramasulabhai prasadhanaih viprakaryate. And when the jwewllery comes, '*citrakarmaparicayena abharanaviniyogam kurvah'*.

Sweet words are always appreciated in anybody, especially in a girl. Kalidasa has reflected this likeable, lovable quality in the very name of his character, Priyamvada. Priyamvada makes Shakuntala the target of her good-humoured raillery as she compares her to a creeper :

atraiva tavat muhurtakam tishtha tvayopagataya
latasanatha iva ayam kesarvrakshakah pratibhati (I, 19)

Shakunthala acknowledges her power of witty repartee and word play :

" *atah khalu priyamvadasi tvam.* "

Dhushyanta also seconds it : " *Priyamapi tathyamaha priyamvada.* "

On Dhushyanta's arrival, Priyamvada not only gives hints about Shakunthala's whereabouts but also prompts him to ask questions freely : "*punarapi vaktukama iva arya*" Then frankly gives the hint about Shakuntala being a prospective bride :
"*Guroh punarasyah anurupavarapradane sankalpah*". At this Shakuntala feigns to be angry and wants to leave. But clever Priyamvada is quick witted and she retains her saying " You can't go, you owe me in watering the plants: "*Na te yuktam gantum. Vrkshasechane dve dharayasi me*" Priyamvada is clever enough to recognise the King because of his ring. Priyamvada acts as an empowered girl making the best use of her five senses and her intuition.

She did break rules but with utmost care. Priyamvada helps Shakuntala in her clandestine love for Dhushyantha. She guides her to send him love letter hidden in the platter of *Prasad* :

Madanalekhosya Kriyatam. Devatashesshapadeshena sumanogopitam krtva tasya
hastam prapayishyami

When Shakunthala is nervous about her love, as a true friend, Priyamvada gives her moral support saying, " Don't worry. You have chosen as per your status."

Sagaram ujjhitva kutra va mahanadi avaarati.
Ka iha sahakaram antarena atmuktalatam
pallavitam sahate.

But she is practical and careful not to play with her friend's life and makes sure that Dushyanta is also snicere in his love. *Sakhisneho mam punaruktavadinim karishyati. Artiharena rajna bhavitavyam. Tat arhate jivitam asyah avalambitum.*

The message of Priyamvada is – Be your age, enjoy life but be ready for everything. She tries to convince herself that Dushyanta will not betray. *Na tadrshah akritivishesha gunavirodhino bhavanti.*

But she has her trepidations about Kanva.

Param tatah kim pratipatsyate?

Persuading Durvasa Rishi is another lesson we learn. Don't despair. Keep trying. (*Kimapi punah sanukroshah krtah).*

Priyamvada was in no way perfect, but then who is!

Konama ushnodakena navamalikam sinchate – not to tell Shakuntala about Durvasa's coming is questionable. But we can empathise with her, knowing how devoted they are to Shakuntala.

(i) *ayam janah kasya haste samarpitah?*

(ii) *Shakuntalavirahitam shunyam tapovanam katham pravishamah?*

But life is sour and sweet, hard and soft.

So Priyamvada as depicted by Kalidasa in the play *Shakuntalam,* stands for action and innovation. She is the ideal role-model for the girls of that section of our society, where the parents are still not ready and brave enough to grant their daughters, their due, though realizing that the society is indeed changing. In such a situation the girls have to go more than halfway to help the parents. Their passivity must give way to initiative. It will be a gradual process. It can be that much easier and faster, if they identify with and accept Priyamvada as a role model.

To summarise and conclude :-

A positive attitude, readiness to face problems, keeping one's cool in adversity and constantly reaching out to one's dream for the future, is what Priyamvada is all about and more. And such inspiration is what girls need today for empowering themselves for a fruitful future.

Kalidasa's Women Characters as Role Model for Women Empowerment

Dr (Mrs) Shalini

Kalidasa, is the greatest poet and dramatist in the realm of ancient Sanskrit literature. To appreciate the poet, a creator of seven works, of varied tastes, is not very easy. The female characters depicted by him, are projected strongly along with the male ones and they reveal universal virtues. Superb characterization, judicious selection of themes, harmonization of events, keen observation of human nature, perfect delineation of love, refined presentation of the sacred and high ideals of Indian culture have earned for him an exalted place in the galaxy of world poets. He realizes the dignity and worth of human life and endeavors to present high and innocent ideals in order to promote the interest and welfare of humanity by providing eternal bliss. In brief, it can be safely said, that the women characters of heroic quality like Gautami, Anasuya Urvassi, Priyamvada, Malavika, Menaka and Shakuntala are all embodiments of "women's empowerment" within the framework of Hindu culture of the days and may be projected as role models for the present generation of girls. Kalidasa has successfully presented the character of Shakuntala and at the same time, he has been able to maintain the high esteem of womanhood. He has been able to balance the romance and the bitter factual of his characters on one side and the high cultural aspect of our civilization, especially in the context of women on the other side. If love and romance had only been conformed to their literal meaning or the bitter facts of birth of Shakuntala had been taken otherwise then Kalidasa would not have been remembered as custodian of our rich Indian culture and civilization.

Kalidasa's precious contribution to. Indian literature consists of *Rtusamhara; Malavikagnimitra; Kumarsambhava; Vikramorvashiya; Meghaduta; Raghuvamsa; Abhijnana Sakuntala.* Kalidasa, has achieved greater success in presenting the women characters in his aforesaid works. The poet has depicted women as

beautiful, clever, virtuous, amiable and self-sacrificing. They are faithful wives and affectionate mothers of illustrious sons. Free from conventionalism, they are true, tender hearted, brave and devoted wives. They are individual cum universal. They have wisdom and understanding. Firm in determination, they follow the right path and sacrifice pleasures for the sake of their husbands. They are wise counselors, good companions and devoted pupils in learning fine art. They serve their husbands as homemakers and always accompany them in the performance of duties. They are the root of social welfare and religious activities. The concept of 'Ardhanariswara' illustrates this truth more clearly.

A gradual evolution of Kalidasa's poetic genius, is reflected in his works. We meet with human characters in his early literary works: *Rtusamhara* and *Malavikagnimitra*. The *Meghaduta* treats of semi-divine beings. The *Vikramorvasya* combines the two worlds: the celestial and the terrestrial. The *Kumarsambhava* is concerned with divine characters alone. *The Abhijnana Sakuntala* presents a blending of earthly and heavenly characters. *The Raghuvamsa* is purely earthly, as it portrays human characters with noble ideals and lofty sentiments.

Kalidasa delineates love as a passion in the *Rtusamhara* and the *Malavikagnimitra*. In the *Meghaduta* the dross of passion is burnt and love becomes purified through suffering. In the *Vikramorvashiya*, love becomes lyrical, but also explosive. The *Kumarsambhava* depicts the ideal of spiritual love that travels from birth to birth. Herein Kalidasa has joined beauty with austerity. The passion of love born of physical grace and charm, is chastened through penance. In the *Abhijnana Sakuntala*, the physical love transforms into spiritual love. The *Raghuvamsa* depicts the pleasures of conjugal love in all its serene, pure and elevated aspects.

In *Abhijnana Shakuntala*, the character Shakuntala, has been strongly projected by Kalidasa by introducing the two characters of Priyamvada and Anasuya, the two fellow companions of Shakuntala. She is the daughter of royal sage Visvamitra and a celestial courtesan,

Menaka. Her foster father Kanva and foster mother Gautami, in their hermitage, have brought her up. Sakuntala is the uncommon beauty on this earth and yet beyond human approach.She has brotherly relations and affection with birds and beasts, plants and creepers near her hermitage. By her pleasing behavior, she makes the forest-world as her own. For her abilities, Kanva appoints her as his representative to receive the guests, in his absence. Shakuntala had welcomed Dushyanta in the hermitage in the absence of her foster father and after sometime, they slowly came ,closer and fell in love with each other. They performed *Gandharva Vivaha* in the absence of Kanva .Durvasa Risi had come to the hermitage, and he cursed Shakuntala for not being welcomed properly as she was lost in the thoughts of her beloved Dushyanta. The risi cursed her that the person in whose thought she was lost would not recognize her. Shakuntala has regard for her foster father and without his permission, she cannot do anything. When Kanva comes to learn about the secret marriage of Shakuntala with Dushyanta, he approves their marriage and blesses Shakuntala to beget a sovereign offspring. Then he sends Shakuntala to her husband after nine years. Dushyanta, being afraid of the public scandal, rejects his lawful wife and his legitimate son. However, he accepts them again on aerial voice.

We find that after her marriage, Shakuntala is anxious. to live with her loving husband and was sent by Kanva along with Gautami and others to Dusyanta with her veiled face. However, when she was humiliated and rejected by her own lord, all her ambitions and dreams were swept away at a stroke. She blazes into fury when Dushyanta condemns the womenfolk and laughs at her. He doubts her chastity and makes fun of her craftiness. Her reputation and prestige are at stake then she becomes bold and rebukes the king in harsh words. The king is astonished on seeing her face red with anger. She remained silent when she was personally being blamed. However, she bursts into anger when her entire class was being ridiculed. Shakuntala suffers the worst as a devoted wife. With endurance and fortitude, she leads the life of a bereaved wife. In adversity, she leaves her complacency and suffers in silence. She realizes that her youthful beauty cannot get her husband back, but with patience and grace, she suffers. She wins back both her

husband and son in great pleasure in the hermitage of Maricha.

We find that Kalidasa has represented the old theme according to the high ideals of Hindu religion. He remains faithful in the presentation of womanhood in all its aspects. He presents various types of characters in their idealistic forms. The women characters of Kalidasa be a daughter, a wife or a mother, have been depicted within the cultural and social norms. Shakuntala as a daughter did not speak, until she was asked to do so by Gautami and that too to safeguard her from being ridiculed beyond the limits. A gradual development of traits is seen in the female characters depicted by the poet genius and through these he tries to present the high ideals of ancient Indian culture in as expressive manner as possible. Kalidasa has emphasized that love cannot be put before our duties. If there are lapses on our duty front we have to repay it adversely. This has been the case with Shakuntala when she had unknowingly lapsed in performing her duties, by not welcoming risi Durvasa. However, Kalidasa's motive was to depict that neglect of duty is punishable.

Today the time has changed. Women in India are becoming more and more conscious of their constitutional and statutory rights, even the rural and tribal women among them. This consciousness has awakened in them a sense of urgency in experiencing equality and social justice. Without these two, democracy will prove to be an illusion. Many laws, have been enacted from time to time to bring equality amongst the two sexes- male and female, among all sections of Hindu society. However, legal reforms may prove to be a far cry without social reforms.

The roots of women's disability lie deeper in our social structure. Women will not feel satisfied if both the sexes are given equally green pastures. They would feel satisfied only if the fence between the two pastures be removed. Therefore, granting equal privileges to both sexes does not matter much unless social justice is achieved. Even a good law will remain unproductive if the general climate of social life and the very angle of vision and attitude of the society would not be

conducive 'for its implementation.

The state of self-reliance in which women of today wish to live, demands economic independence, ability to take decisions and to form new social relations. They wish to be empowered in all these aspects. However, attaining all this for women empowerment must not be done in a hurry and in haphazard manner. In my view, empowerment is a process and not measurable in any unit. Empowerment has to be made, keeping our social norms, culture etc. in the background. Our rich cultural and social heritage is not to be lost in the race of empowerment. Kalidasa has also in *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* tried to stress upon women empowerment in the backdrop of self-respect, value education, patience etc. Women today in modem times are taking stronger decisions due to their enhanced awareness of their legal and constitutional rights, but I think that aping the western culture, undermining our rich cultural and social inheritance is sheer foolishness. They can enjoy their rights and privileges without undermining our rich cultural and social inheritance. Aping the western society in toto is taking the sense of empowerment of girls, which is destructive and disastrous and will result only in ruining our rich social and cultural heritage.

Their role must be within the framework of Hindu culture, which has a long living past. For this, the parameters of empowerment of women must be in keeping with the role of heroic women characters depicted by Kalidasa in his lyrics, epics and dramas. Shakuntala is an empowered woman, with her positive self image and self confidence and is able to keep up her dignity in the oppressive environment.

'Arnie' in Kalidasa's Plays: Models of Women Empowerment

Dr. Padma Srinivasan

Kalidasa's three plays, namely, *Malvikagnimitram, Vikramorvasiyam* and *Abijnana Sakunthalam* are hero-centred wherein the female roles are played in a low-key. However, his female protagonists, Malavika, Uravasi and Shakunthala do not fail to affirm their power and in fact, they help their creator to make his male-figures, round characters in the given context. To the critics, they are a source of attraction along with their male-counterparts - they are not given individual attention, except Shakunthala - and the other lesser female figures of the plays are insignificant to them.

This paper ventures to scrutinize the 'Amies' of these exemplary heroines, namely, Bakulavalika, Chitralekha, Priyamvada and Anasuya, whose wisdom, presence of mind and strategies help their mistresses achieve their objective. Kalidasa has allowed them only a limited space; but, within this restricted area of action they reveal a remarkable courage and steadfastness that not only lend support to the female protagonists but also offer a positive lesson to the modern youngsters to prompt an awareness that one has to realize one's potency, the 'power-within', surface it and convert into action when needed. A person thus self-actualized becomes a role-model. A brief general discussion of the key-terms, 'Role-model' and 'Women Empowerment' is imperative before analyzing the plays.

A 'Role model' refers to a person who fills his or her role as a good or bad example for others. A good example is a positive role model. A bad example is a negative role model. The term role model on its own is usually taken to mean a positive role model. A positive role model carries out a role demonstrating values, ways of thinking and acting, which arc considered good in that role. Others hopefully follow the example. He or she has an open door policy. You can talk to them "off the record", someone who is honest and genuine (no matter how much it hurts), someone who is human, admits when they make a

mistake or does not shout at you in front of others or talk about you in your absence. A 'Role-model' gains such a trait by constant empowerment in search of his /her own self, and contains this moral stratum at any odds.

Empowerment is a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in development of activities. In its course people get equipped to govern themselves effectively. This process involves the use of power, but not 'power over' others or power as dominance as is traditionally the case; rather, power is seen as 'power to' or power as competence which is generated and shared by the disenfranchised as they begin to shape the content and structure of their daily existence. In the women's movements it involves what has been called "consciousness-raising", that is, a participatory process of individuals sharing their life experiences with others in a regular group process. This in turn aims to create the emotional space for individuals to challenge low self-esteem, fear, misplaced hostility, and other issues dealing with internalized oppression. In this course they can voice their own life experiences in a context where they learn to apply analytic tools and concepts to understand themselves as structured by the oppressive groups and also initiate others to understand their own selves better. It assumes that individuals can develop increased *power with* others as well as individual capacities to do things by a process of consciousness-raising.It should be remembered what Carolyn Hannan (Director, UN Division for the Advancement of Women) says in her paper entitled "Transforming Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming", presented at the International Symposium, Seoul in 2003:

> Women's empowerment can be understood as a process whereby women, individually and collectively, become aware of how power structures, processes and relationships operate in their lives and gain the self-confidence and strength to challenge the resulting gender inequalities .... Empowerment involves awareness raising, building of self-confidence, expansion of choices, involvement in decision-making and increased access to and control over resources .... Empowerment is also much more than simply facilitating an increase in

women's participation. . . . should lead to concrete action ... The process of empowerment involves changing consciousness, identifying areas needing change, developing strategies and action to be taken, monitoring these actions and their outcomes.

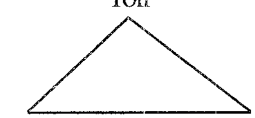
Women's empowerment has five components: (i) women's sense of self-worth (ii) their right to have and determine choices (iii) their right to have access to opportunities and resources (iv) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home, and (v) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

How these general features of 'Empowerment' operate through the literary figures must be analysed. Though they are 'literary models', some of them, for instance, Sita, Panchali, Kannagi, to name a few, have become 'Role-models' to the Indian community and their different facets have been dealt with by different creative writers in different Indian languages, to bring out their 'power **from within'.** Thus, they become 'empowerment figures' or 'Role-models' to the Indian public in general, and Indian women in particular, to empower themselves at different contexts.

Chronologically the three plays of Kalidasa demonstrate his progression as a dramatist, from naivety to maturity. As is the plays' progression, so are the scenes concerned with the female protagonists and their companions. Bakulavalika, Malavika's friend does not receive the same attention from her creator as Chitralekha or Priyamvada or Anasuya. Even Chitralekha too is not given enough scope as Shakunthala's friends. All the three heroines are Beauty par excellence and Kalidasa jubilantly celebrates their beauty in scintillating poetry, voiced through his male protagonists whose full-time occupation seems to be waxing in eloquence in a lovelorn mood, intoxicated in their physical appearance. In other words, these poor women are not given enough chances to reveal their 'power **from within'.**

On the contrary, the 'Amies' accepting their subordinate position and unfailing in their loyalty and service to their mistresses, reveal their inner power when situations demand and in the most

unassuming manner. Unlike their mistresses they do not have emotional commitments nor have any other vocation. Always in a constant vigil, they are like the shadows of their ladies. Their only concern is to bring in comfort and consolation to the agonized minds of the ladies. As R.K Nagu notes about the 'Toli' of the *Cankam* Literature - about whom a discussion will be taken up later — "She (Thozhi) thinks only of the welfare of the heroine; she undergoes difficulties to protect the lovers and she sacrifices her joys for the sake of the lover's welfare." *(A Critical Study of Palaittinai in Cankam Literature,* Unpublished Ph D thesis, Madras University, 1969, p.132) A note on the 'Toli' character in the Tamil *Cankam* Literature will be pertinent at this point. The 'Toli' is the top-point in the triangular configuration of the *Cankam 'Akam'* literature.



She is the bridge connecting the two banks, namely, the 'Talaivi' (Heroine) and the 'Talaivan' (Hero);

> "She guides as the North-pole star, when the heroine's mindvessel is tossed between the impeding rocks in her dream-sea; she helps the hero by enlightening him with her wisdomflame when his mind gets helplessly caught in the dark, foggy conflict; she is the baton to steady the foster-mother when she gets entangled in the mire of rituals",

says Sarala Rajagopalan in her commendable study in Tamil, *Toli in Cankam Literature (canka ilakkiyatil toli,* 10, tr.mine). She is the character created only for the sake of Talaivi to effect a successful union between the man and the woman. She is not a slave; she takes all rights to address and help Talaivi whenever she encounters physical or mental trouble. Both address each other as 'annai, annaai' meaning 'mother'. *Toli* is the *Talaivi's* alter-ego and accepts her lady's actions as her own.

She takes liberty to chide *Talaivan*, points to his infirmities and goes to the extent of preventing him from entering his own home, street and locality. She reprimands not only the *Talaivi's* mother for not carrying on her 'dharma' properly but also the *Talaivan's* friends for their tactless actions and uncharitable misbehaviour. *Cankam* Literature comprises single lyrics and has dramatic elements. They are like one-act plays or dramatic monologues and written with a precise grammatical convention, codified by *Tolkaapiyam,* a Tamil grammar extant of the yore. The *Cankam 'Akam'* provides exhaustive scope for the 'Arnie' character to empower herself, though it is restricted to the love-affair of *Talaivi* and *Talaivan.*

In Kalidasa's Bakulavalika is Malavika's maid and companion, a devoted servant who is in the constant practice of motivating her Mistress, a great dancer. Bakulavalika, of course, does not know this art nor should we expect her to learn it. She is introduced in the opening scene of the play and through her we understand that King Agnimithra is in love with Malavika whose expertise in dancing is praised by Ganadasa, her teacher: "The skill of a teacher imparted to a worthy pupil attains greater excellence, as the water of a cloud is turned into a pearl in a seashell" (Devadhar, *Malavikagnimitram, 13).*

Paathra visesha nyastham gunaantharam vrajathi shilpamaadhathu:

Jalamiva samudra shukthau muktha phalathaam payodasya. (Act I)

Elated to hear this eulogy, Bakulavalika immediately wants to convey this happy message to her lady. "Then, noble sir, give me leave to go, so that I might stimulate her zeal by informing her how well the noble teacher is satisfied with her." (13)

Thena hyanyjhaanathumaamaarya:
yaavadasya aaryasaya parithoshanivedanenothsaaham vardhayaami. (Act I)

Her anxiety to leave the place at once to share this joy with her dear lady, her instantaneous response indicates not only her genuine love for her lady but also her sacred duty to motivate her. Motivating

others is one of the leadership traits and Bakulavalika seems to have acquired this quality by her sheer dedication to her job, of taking care of Malavika. Motivation and power are so closely linked together that one can say there is power in a motivated person and obviously, in the motivating person too.

Bakulavalika's empowerment is well-delineated in Act III, when she comes along with Malavika to the Pramadavana at the command of the Queen to conduct a ritual to the Asoka tree which has not blossomed in that season. This is an interesting scene in which the King and his friend, Queen Iravati and her companion, and Malavika and Bakulavalika are at different areas in the garden. The king's friend assures him that he has conveyed the King's message to Malavika through Bakulavalika, who promised him that she would do the best to arrange for a tryst; but, it is not easy to get an access to her lady since "the poor girl is being more carefully guarded by the queen like a treasure by a cobra" (57). Both the friends act as confidant-messengers. Malavika's soliloquy reveals her mind that she too is longing for the King. Bakulavalika comes with the required adornments to beautify Malavika to carry out the ritual. The conversation between the lady and 'Arnie' is a superb piece of execution wherein Bakulavalika happily exercises her empowerment. K.K. Pillai's observation about the' Arnie' ('Toli') figure in *Cankam* literature is applicable to Bakulavalika also: "During the period of courtship, the Toli of the girl figures prominently. The Toli companion plays the role of a faithful comrade, a genuine friend and guide". *(A Social History of the Tamils, 346)* Malavika is surprised to see her friend's meticulous painting on her feet and appreciates her, "Happily you are free from conceit." Bakulavalika politely replies to her: "Surely I shall be full of conceit, now that I can exhibit my skill on worthy feet." (75) She does not forget her servile rank and suggests that good art can shine only when it is exhibited through a perfect medium. Now it is the time for her to pass on the King's message to Malavika. Her confident talk and the rebuttals from her lady are all heard by the hiding King. His admiration for this clever girl points to her 'power from within' which empowers her to talk boldly to her lady: "Well, am I not a Bakula garland which gives out fragrance when crushed?" (79) *vimarda surabhir bakulaavaalikaa khalvaham* (Act III) She humorously puns on her own name and tells her friend

indirectly that even if Malavika drives her out, she would see to it that she performs her assigned duty at any odds. King Agnimithra exactly identifies her inner power and her firm attitude. "Surely she has held her purpose by her words which were spoken after ascertaining her feelings; and which effectively answered all her objections; it is quite proper that the life of a lover is dependent on a love-messenger." (79)

Bhavajnaanatharam prathuthena pratyaakhyaane daththa yukthotharelJa / Vaakyeneyam sththapitha khe nideshe sththane praanaa: kaaminaam duthyadhinaal

To quote Rm.Periakaruppan: "The maid is portrayed as the friend, guide and philosopher to the lover in their secret love". *(The Tradition and Talent in Cankam Poetry, 122)*

To motivate is one of the leadership traits. During motivation process, the motivator surfaces his/her 'power-from-within' and heaves out the 'power-within' of the motivated person. Bakulavalika remarkably manipulates the situation and conducts her mission perfectly. We can inwardly dramatize her body-language - her composure and calm voice with adequate modulation - helping in her empowerment. C.R. Devadhar, a noted critic and translator of Kalidasa's plays does not even mention the name of Bakulavalika, while he makes a character-analysis. However, as he compares the three plays he makes a valid observation about the dramatist's diction that "in spite of the frequent *curiosafelicitas* of his diction,we do not come across that smoothness and rounded perfection and inevitable grace that mark the mature style of poet" *(M,* 'Introduction', iii). Interestingly, those flashes of style happen in the narration ofVidushaka and Bakulavalika, which help us in assessing the latter's empowerment.

Chitralekha is the nymph-maid of the nymph Urvasi. Sri Aurobindo crisply summarises her role and character in his fine study 'Vikram and the Nymph' that attests to this Arnie's empowerment. His words deserve mention :

> Chitralekha, more fortunate than the other Opsaras in obtaining through three acts a large canvas as the favourite and comrade of Urvasie, suffers dramatically from her good fortune, for she

must necessarily appear a little indistinct so near to the superior light of her companion. Indeed dramatic necessity de-mands subdued tones in her portraiture lest she should deflect attention from Urvasie where it is her task to attract it to her; she must be always the cloud's dim legion that prepares us to watch for the lightning. Richness of colour and prominence of line are therefore not permissible; yet in spite of these hampering conditions the poet has made her a sufficiently definite personality. Indeed her indulgent affection, her playful kindliness, her little outbreaks of loving impatience or sage advice the ne-glect of which she takes in excellent part-her continual smiling surrender to Urvasie's petulance and wilfulness and her whole half matron-like air of eldersisterly protection, give her a very sensible charm and attractiveness; there is a true nymphlike and divine grace, tact and felicity in all that she says and does. *(The Harmony of Virtue,* SABCL, Vol.III, 283)

She is luckier than Bakulavalika since her creator provides her with more scope to exercise her empowerment. She appears on the stage in the first act supporting her frightened nymph-mistress, Urvasi, on her arm. Now, it is Chitralekha's duty to cheer her up that she should behave herself like an apsara, who cannot display mortal fear: "Friend, do compose yourself. Meseems you scarcely look a nymph of heaven" (Devadhar, *Vikramorvasiyam,* 11). Soon, we understand that it is love-at-first sight between King Pururavas and Urvasi. Chitralekha has to become a love-messenger now, as her lady reveals her mind that she cannot bid adieu to the King. But, Urvasi is the possession of the heaven. Aware of this great commitment, Chitralekha cleverly rises to the occasion to speak to the king on her friend's behalf. Her words disclose her sagacity: "Friend, Urvashi requests leave of my Lord to take with her to heaven, as a dearly cherished friend, your fame" (21).

Vayasi Urvashi vigfiapayathi mahaarajena abhyanugfiathaa ichchaami priyasakhiimiva mahaarajasya kiirthim mahendralokam nethumithil (Act I)

This is also a kind of a warning to King Puru whose longing look, perhaps, unveils his mind that the 'mortal-nymph' love-affair may not be approved of by Lord Indra, the Devaraja in whose service is Urvasi. She makes fun at Urvasi, who attempts an innocent ploy as though her

necklace got entangled in the thicket - a trick her junior Sakunthala also employs in *Abijnana Sakunthalam.* When Urvasi bids Chitralekha to extricate it, the maid's clever reply deserves to be noted: "Seems too deeply entangled to be set free. Well, I will try" (21). The meaning is obvious - King Puru-Urvasi's love affair cannot be extricated that easily. Yet another suggestion is that an apsara like Urvasi who enjoys a dignified divine status cannot allow herself to be knotted in human love. Her assignments are totally different from those of the mortals. She empowers herself to remind her nymph-mistress in a crisp statement, of her duty and of her own inferior position as a servant, to sever the nymph-mortal link.

She is seen next in Act II once again along with Urvasi. She is her lady's inseparable shadow, the unfailing guide and the immediate help at the adverse circumstances. Urvasi is in a hurry to go to King Puru's palace. She is naturally irritated at Chitralekha's feigned innocent queries and her cryptic warning, "Think well, beforehand, yourself'. Urvasi's angry answer, "Love leads me on, what is there to be considered?" (39), is almost like saying 'shut up'. Chitralekha understands that her mistress' mind is caught in an irredeemable craziness, which has made her forget her nymph qualities. She must go to her beloved at any cost. Chitralekha allays her fear and anxiety: "Have no fear dear girl! Have not we two been made inviolable of the enemy of the gods by the revered precep tor of the immortals by imparting to us the mystic art of tying up the hair called *Aparajita?"* (41)

sakhi visrabhdhaa bhaval nanu bhagavataa devagurunaa aparaajitaam naama shikhaabandhanavidhyaamupadishataa tridashapratipakhshasya alanganiiye krute sva: I (Act II)

Ensnared irretrievably in love, Urvasi cannot empower herself with the god-given boons nor would she remember her own powers without her maid.Immortal longings result in mortal failures. Motivated by her maid, Urvasi decides to hide herself in the *tiraskarini* charm to approach her beloved. Unable to understand this ruse, the baffled Chitraleka asks her, "But why do you act the part of a mortal?" (43) She constantly reminds her mistress that she is not an ordinary mortal but an apsara endowed with heavenly powers. But, as a dutiful servant she obeys her lady's order to come out of *tiraskarini* and pay her

salutations to the king. Chitralekha excels in her conversation with the king, as she cleverly announces about her coming first that the clouds herald lightning and then conveys the intelligently worded message: "That in her (former) peril caused by the enemy of the gods, Your Majesty gave her protection; she, therefore prays that on this occasion too, when fiercely assailed by love that has arisen at your sight, Your Majesty, should take compassion on her" (51).

> *Mama suraarisambhave durjati maharaja eva darshanasamutthena madanena balavad vaadhyamaanaa bhuyopimahaarajena anukampaniiyetil* (Act II)

In this assignment, Chitralekha becomes the messenger of Urvasi's beloved also!

Act III presents Chitralekha at her best in empowerment. Urvasi's repeated absentmindedness and Chitralekha's patient pacifying prove the latter's mental ability and balance. Urvasi forgetting that she is in hiding rues that the King does not take notice of her - her mischievous maid has to point to her about the *tiraskarini.* Earlier she has to remind her lady to put on the magical concealment and now to put it off! But, Urvasi' s anguish grows sharp when the Queen comes there and she becomes more desperate to see the King's concern for her. Chithralekha's worldly knowledge and common sense come handy to her to alleviate the agony of her mistress. Urvasi, though a popular apsara, looks now like a simpleton. Chitralekha soothens her: "You simple one, these citizens when they transfer their affections to other women become, indeed, very courteous to their wives" (87)

> *ayi mugdhe anyasankaantapremaanau naagarikaa adhikam dakhinaa bhavantil* (Act III)

Whenever she gets an opportunity, she does not fail to educate her lady nor is she afraid to voice out the truth. She seems to be well-aware of men's weakness! At the same time, she reveals her nobility as she admires the gracefulness and magnanimity of the Queen, when she readily gives way to some other woman in her husband's life. Chitralekha is much relieved to know that her lady would be happily united with her beloved. She calmly consoles her dear friend: "Friend, nothing will any

more impede your union with your love, now that it is assented to by this lady of such an exalted spirit who is such a devoted wife". (91).

> *sakhi mahaanubhavayaa pativratayaa abhyanujnaata: anantaraayaste priyasamaagamo bhavishyatil.*

A contented and serene Chitralekha bids adieu to her darling mistress, leaving an indelible mark in the minds of the audience, as she makes her exit. V.T. Manickam rightly states that the 'arnie' (toli) is "like the little candle that spreads its light all round and dispels darkness. The candle wastes itself away and the maid wears herself out and fills the life of her master and mistress with light, love and sweetness." *(Study of Marutham in Tamil Literature, 199)*

An empowered woman holds no ill-feelings towards others and is ready to accept challenging conditions. As said earlier she has a sense of self worth and correctly determines choices. Both Bakulavalika and Chitralekha are perfect illustrations of women empowerment. The latter's empowerment could be well ascertained since she enjoys a larger scope in the play to exercise her empowering traits.

Priyamvada and Anasuya, the 'amies' of Sakunthala in *Abhijyanasakunthalam* are the luckiest pair of maids who get not only a spacious canvas for their action but also greater scope to exercise their empowerment. Unlike Bakulavalika and Chitralekha, these two receive lessons from the natural surroundings of the forest at the ashrama of Sage Kanva, serving Shakunthala, the very embodiment of nature. Chandra Rajan pays a high encomium to this 'Beauty-Excellent' who has even captured the western minds like Goethe. "She is portrayed as the child of Nature, or the Lady of Nature, kin to all forms of life in the sacred grove". *(Kalidasa : The Loom of Time,* 49) She quotes the words of Sarngarava, an inmate of the ashrama, as he hears the cuckoo's song: "Kin to her during her woodland sojourn" The trees now give her leave to go. (4:12) To be this lady's maids is in itself a special privilege. C.R. Devadhar who has nothing to say about the friends of Malavika and Urvasi makes a short note about them in the 'Preface' to *Abhijyanasakunthalam.* He says: "The two companions of Shakuntala are drawn with delicate taste. How well are they differentiated, Anasuya grave and sensible, Priyamvada playful, vivacious, and yet, both are

equally devoted to Shakuntala". (xxiv)

Both these maids appear in four acts - with Shakunthala in the first act itself and very soon they meet King Dushyant bereft of his regalia. The three friends are engaged in a pleasant chat, discussing their tree and creeper companions that merrily cheer them up with fragrant blossoms and buzzing beetles. Kalidasa's resplendent imagery happily finds rich expression in this tete-a-tete. Shakunthala appreciates Priyamvada that she is aptly named 'sweet-talker' - she proves so in the beginning of the conversation, which centers on the job of watering plants. Anasuya is surprised at Sage Kanva's concern for trees since he has delegated this duty to his dear daughter Shakunthala. But, Priyamvada shows a greater concern to those trees, which have stopped blossoming. She tells her lady: "Friend Shakuntala, the trees of the hermitage that bloom in summer have all been watered. Shall we now sprinkle those that are past flowering? That would be an act of devotion, not looking for a reward". (176) Shakunthala welcomes her lovely thought - a thought that conveys an incalculable value to the modem youngsters, questioning the 'wisdom' of creating old-age homes. The entire conversation between the friends indicates not only the value of preserving the environment but also the empathy one should cultivate.

King Dushyant who is already there in hiding falls flat for Shakunthala as soon as he sees her. Masking as an ordinary person, he pursues a lively conversation with the girls. They too are quite at ease with him. As Chandra Rajan observes both of them soon "see through his threadbare disguise and the mask is quietly dropped, though the girls play along and keep up the pretence". (Kalidasa 90) They also repeatedly remind their confused lady to carry out the rituals to welcome the guest in the hermitage. They now know well of Shakunthala's love for this man. King Dushyant has to leave the place immediately as he hears the cries of men about a mad elephant's entry into the hermitage causing havoc. He is in haste now. But, as ashramites they cannot neglect their duty. They empower themselves to invite the King to visit them again: "Noble Lord! I think we know you well enough to feel that you will forgive us this rude interruption of our welcome; may we request you to visit us once more so that we may make amends for

the inadequate hospitality extended to you, Sir". (185)

> *Aarya, asambhavitaatithisatkaaram bhuyopi prekshananimittam lajjaavahe aaryam vijnaapayitum.* (Act I)

In Act III they extract the truth from Shakunthala and they devise a plan to carry this message to the king. They ask her to write a love-letter to him - Priyamvada conceives of a novel idea: "Why don't you incise the words with your nail on this lotus-leaf soft as parrot's downy breast?" (205) But, before this plan is executed King Dushyant appears on the scene. The intelligent maids leave the place for the lovers' tryst, after carrying on a vibrant, brilliant and carefully worded chat with the King, which conveys the message. While Priyamvada is genial and animated, Anasuya is serious and straight in their respective talks. The former quickly answers the King when he asks her whether Shakunthala's fever is abated: "With the right medicine at hand it ought to improve, Sir. Your Majesty, the love you bear to each other is plain to see. But the love I bear my friend prompts me to say something". (205) She loses no time to tell him of course, after a short meandering, "The god of love, mighty as he is, has reduced our dear friend here to this state for love of you. You are bound therefore to sustain her life by taking her". (206) However, the somber Anasuya just cannot accept the mere union; she would like to have reassurance from the King. She empowers herself to tell him frankly: "Sire, one hears that kings have many loves. Pray act in such a manner as not to bring sorrow and bitter tears to her kinsfolk". (206)

> *vayasya, bahuvallabha rajaan: sruuyante* I *yatha nau priyasakhi bandhujanashocha niiya na bhavthi tathaa nivartaya* I (Act III)

Act IV is action-packed and the beginning of the scene is left to these friends. They are worried about Shakunthala's negligence of duty who lost in her love-thought fails to welcome Sage Durvasa. She incurs his wrath in the form of a curse, which is going to make her life miserable. Chandra Rajan, with regard to the curse, observes rightly: "A curse usually deprives the person of the object that was responsible, directly or indirectly, for his or her wrongdoing. But in Shakuntala, Durvasa's curse neatly phrases the failure of duty (wrongdoing in his

eyes), in balanced clauses. The punishment is far in excess of the negligence of which Shakuntala was guilty; there were extenuating circumstances in her case". (52) The curse is heard off-stage and the girls realize its disastrous impact. They hurry to meet the sage. It is Priyamvada who empowers herself to plead to the angry sage to receive an amendment to the curse - all these are recounted in the dialogue between the two girls. (Chandra Rajan's translation *The Loom of Time* shows that Anasuya extracts the remedy from the Sage.) Whether it is Priyamvada or Anasuya, her presence of mind and the devotion she has for her lady, retrieves her from permanent punishment. They are sad to see their dear friend lost in oblivion, " Still, as if drawn in a picture, her cheek resting on her left hand ... her mind so totally absorbed in thoughts of her absent lord that she does not seem to be aware of her own self ... how could she have noticed the presence of a visitor".(216) Obviously, they have no mind to talk about the curse to her. Nevertheless, gulping their sorrow, these wonderful maids recount the curse to Sakunthala in masked words, when she is about to leave the ashram. "Sakuntala dear, listen, if the King be at all slow to recognize you, be sure to show him the Ring inscribed with his name" (227).

> *sakhi, yadi naama sa raajaa pratyabhijnaanmantharo bhavettatastasyedam aatmanaamadhe yaankitam anguliiyakam darshaya*
> I (Act IV)

This is perhaps the best communication bearing the required message in limited words. Without these candid friends Sakunthala would not have received any remedy for the unforeseen curse. With this climactic condition, Sakunthala bids adieu to her' green world', bosom friends and her caring kinsfolk. Had Priyamvada and Anasuya followed Sakunthala to the King's court, the scene would have been different. Dramatic necessity has compelled Kalidasa to leave them abruptly in the forest itself. The empowerment and intelligence of these two 'amies' brought up in idyllic surroundings, unlike Bakulavalika in the palace and Chitralekha in the heavens, is amazing.

As said earlier, the 'Amies' of the three plays of Kalidasa are permitted very limited scope and space and they have to move in a cramped plane of action. Their only duty is to pacify their loveafflicted ladies. In this single agenda, they exhibit their remarkable intelligence and excellent empowerment, which the heroines are not given chance to display. There is no exasperating conflict nor any distinctly intriguing situations. Within this ambience the 'Amies' discharge their duties and establish their empowerment. They must be acknowledged as models in the restricted sense for their wittiness, boldness, wisdom, common sense, verbal skill and above all for their unswerving loyalty to their mistresses.The study of" Amies' points to two unassailable facts: (i) that a woman has to empower herself in her own way (ii) that she should review the given circumstance and exercise empowerment.

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Women Characters in Abhigyanshakuntalam

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I

Before discussing women in Kalidasa, it is necessary for me to consider serious implications of the issue such as this. Our obtaining discourse has marked an increasing tendency of using literary texts for sociological study or conclusions. Such a pursuit has been theoretically validated in the second half of the 20th century by Structuralist and Post-structuralist approaches. Claude Levi-Strauss by using Ferdinand de Saussurean linguistic model and Jacques Derrida by using philosophical inquisitions for reading texts in a deconstructionist way commented on the system and nature of language, and proposed that all systems of signs are texts and all discourses — literary and non literary use language which is self-reflexive or narcissistic in nature. It speaks more about itself and less about the object that is the subject of consideration or articulation. In the process, the ages old distinction between literary and non-literary texts and literary and other non-literary discourses like social sciences was obliterated. They were clustered as human sciences, as may be discerned in Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" that can be considered as the manifesto of Post-Structuralism. The typology and hierarchy of discourse that existed for almost more than 2000 years from Plato onwards came to be dismantled in the second half of the 20th century. Poetry or fiction, history or philosophy all were not constructs, composed in accordance with the centre of power, as Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Louis Mink among other proposed. Literature was fictitious, so the new development did not impact its status but history and philosophy that till then claimed to be based on fact, truth and objectivity were adversely affected, for they became fiction in the light of new development.

The developments such as discussed above brought about lasting impact on literary studies and also on study of literature. Literature became subject of study for knowing the society. But there is difference between knowing the society and knowing about the society. In the process literature came to be seen as a document which it is/was not. To know the society, one must go to sociological texts like *smriti* or sociological texts, for literature is not a document. So to know women, their condition and status one must go to sociological texts not literature because there is essential difference between them as knowledge systems. This position I maintain despite the chorus of subscribers of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism against it. The predominance of sociological studies and methodology of social sciences have inveighed upon students and scholars of literature to obviate the difference. The basic contradiction of discourses of social science is that its methodology begins and rests on binary oppositions but it aims at undoing them, though it proves a vain endeavour, for its consideration of object of study or society is based on difference.

The question is: How can differentiating intellect or methodology privileging difference transcend difference? In our Indian tradition non-differentiating (*anânâtva* or *abheda buddhi)* is privileged over the differing intellect (*nânatva buddhi* or *bhedbuddhi)*[1]. The *bhedbuddhi* is considered inferior because it breeds conflict and all conflictual models are based on it. Its opposite counter part strives to resolve conflict. The power paradigm of dominance and exploitation rests on the former while the latter mothers paradigm of love, devotion (*bhakti)* and symbiotic relationship. The only similarity between the two is that both of them are discourses of knowledge with different perception and hierarchy, for in literary discourses the main objective is pleasure, knowledge, if any, thereafter; and in non-literary discourses knowledge is the principle purpose and pleasure is subordinate to it. But the means and objectives are different. Language, it is true, is used all discourses. But language as used in literature aims at eliciting certain state of mind by making 'emotive' use of language aiming at plurality or at least more than one meaning whereas non-literary discourses make referential use of language aiming at singularity of meaning. Also literary

discourse aims at pleasure through subjective/imaginative faculty and knowledge thereafter, but non-literary discourse e.g. social sciences and sciences aim knowledge first through objective faculty and pleasure thereafter. In a way sciences aspire to deal with truth that might be false whereas literature does not lay any claim to truth so it deals with untruth or lies that might prove true in future. However, it does not tell a lie because it does not claim to tell truth. Sir Philip Sidney's famous argument in defense of poetry is well worded and known to us.

Moreover, literary discourse celebrates or negotiates difference in its own way. Bharata sees it in terms of *vritti* (aesthetic properties) and *pravritti* (ethno-territorial). According to Bharata, *pravritti* imposes the difference and informs us of different lands, ways of living and languages. (*'Prathivyang nânâdeshbheshaschâhâra vârtâh prakhyapantitih pravritti').* Vritti *('Vrittishch nivedan')* is the manner of re/presentation. So the question is if there are so many *dishas* (lands/countries) in the world, how is *'samanalakshana',* uniformity of *'prayog'* or presentation, possible? Bharata in *Natyashastram* says:

> *Satyamet samanlakshana prayoga kintu*
> *nanadeshbheshbhashachro loka iti kritwa lokanumaten*
> *vrittisanshritasya natasya mayaa*
> *chaturvidhatwambhihitam...vritti sangsriteshu prayogeshu*
> *abhirata desha, jatah pravrittichatushtayambhinivrittang,*
> *prayogashchotpadita*
> (Chapter 14, *"Pravrittidharma Vyanjak")*

Admittedly there are traces of similarity in representation according to rules, but the difference in cultures, customs and languages inflect the representations according to *lokanumata* (local norms). Bharata announces his divisions in the *prayog* or modes of actual realization of rules, according to local considerations, leading to the four *riti-s* (styles).

The synthesis of representative devices *(vritti),* according to the cultures and customs of the land *(pravritti),* is possible through

'prayog'. The underlying assumption seems to be that the *vritti,* the means of aesthetic representation, are not as universal as often believed. They may exist in an idealized abstract state, but when they are realized (Bharata calls *'prayog'),* it can only be in the context of *pravritti.* So Indian poetics with its insistence on functionality and reception appears more dynamic than it seems on the surface.

Literature generates knowledge. For that matter every word generates knowledge. So wherever a word is used there is knowledge, for every word is an interpretation of an idea in the mind of articulator. So literary discourse is knowledge but of different sort. It can supplement historical or philosophical knowledge and act as co-text. It differs in terms of *madhyam* (medium), *hetu* (means) and *prayojana* (purpose or objectives). To good extent, the nature of knowledge is determined by these attributes particularly the last one.

The purpose behind this elongated discussion is that the topic of our discussion such as women characters of Kalidasa should not persuade us to think that these texts are documents to know about the status of women, for Kalidasa was not either a historian or sociologist. His plays are not documents but literature that strives to tell the truth (to be precise of poetic truth) that rests on maximization or minimization. According to Rajashekhara, the exaggerated mode of description is widely employed in all discourses even in the *veda-s* and *sashtra-s.* This mode of description relying on *arthavad*(praise) is neither incoherent or false, for there is always some purpose that establishes its coherence. He gives an example from *shastras* in *Kavyamimansa* (Chapter 6). "Water is the purest element on this earth, *mantras* are purer than water; among *mantras,* those of *Rg, Yajur* and *Sama* are purer than the rest, but the great thinkers believe the science of grammar to be purer than the *mantras* of these three *vedas*". The example marked by hyperbole or exaggeration depicts indispensability of grammar. Hence, literary texts are best used to supplement as co-text. The New Historicist like Stephen Greenblatt put it in right perspective by stressing the textuality of history and historicity of text, so literary texts and non—literary texts are to be held in both the hands and are to be persued

simultaneously. Literary texts can not be used as evidence, because they do not aim at authenticity. However, they can be used about the pre-historic periods for conjuring or constructing history[2]. They can, however, not be considered as conclusive evidence or be conveniently used for convenient nulgar interpretations whose instances can be seen in the often quoted retort in some of feminist seminars, for instance here because the topic is related to women in Kalidasa, according to which the position of woman was very low in the *Ramayana* period (yet to be determined), as might be seen in Rama's treatment of Sita. But in the next breath, it is stated that Rama was not a historical figure. So Rama is a myth but his ill-treatment of Sita is a historical fact, for it helps in proving pre-conceived conclusions. So the point I want to make here is that we must study Kalidasa's women characters but not to know the condition of women, for Kalidasa's characters are not the means of knowing women in the period because for that one should go to sociological texts like different *smriti* texts that like the present day Constitution of India went through amendments in different periods and so *smritis* like *Yagnavalakya Smriti, Parasara Smriti,* and *Manu Smriti* were written[3].

The *smriti* texts and literary texts put together can serve some purpose in this direction. It is better to celebrate carnival of uncertainty in absence of historical data rather than indulge in false fixities and be victims of fallaciously inferred generalizations.

II

Let us now stand at the threshold of the play and enjoy the pleasure of peeping into the text like Kalidasa's *Abhigyanshakuntalam.* Our bid to centralize something marginal like the title may take us at least a few inches closer to the authorial intentions and compulsions, and sources and forces, however elusive they may be, which a literary work is made of.

Shakuntala of the *Mahabharata* goes through considerable transformation in *The Abhigyanshakuntalam*. Kalidasa's is of different age, smeared as she is in the environs, dust and soil of Kalidasa's

age. In the epic, if the title of the work is a criterion to judge the centrality of character, Shakuntala is the central character, as the Section 1 (7b) 62-69 (B 68-74, C 2799-3125) of the *Adiparva* ('The Origins') is sub-titled after her "Shakuntaloupakhyan." So is the case with Kalidasa's play also, as would appear. But in fact it is not Shakuntala but her recognition which is central in Kalidasa. And in recognition it is recognizer, not recognizee, who is central. The recognizee is at the receiving end. That Kalidasa wanted to centralize Dushyanta, for which he changed Dushyanta for better, becomes evident from the title of the play.

Shakuntala in the epic is 'Sri incarnate', 'black-eyed girl' (65.1), 'the sweet-spoken girl' with 'a flawless body.' (65.5) Vaishampayana further appreciates her for her beautiful hips, a lustrous appearance, and a charming smile. She was radiant with beauty, with the sheen of austerities and the calm of self-restraint. Dushyanta, the king also addresses her 'as perfect of shape as age', 'fair–waisted girl', 'perfection of beauty'. (65:10)

Ved Vyas's Shakuntala is quintessence of the beauty of the *Mahabharata* age. She is simple, straightforward, innocent though fearful initially but fearless when the king does not accept her. Sentimental and emotional indulgence is foreign to her. With no qualms in her heart she coolly tells Dushyanta the story of her birth and like a pragmatic mother she bargains the destiny of her offspring with the king for offering herself in the Gandharva marriage. (67.15) She yields to Dushyanta's importunities but on her own terms.

In the king's court when Dushyanta refuses to recognize her, she faces the king quite courageously without being nervous. Her eyes turned copper red with indignant fury, her pursed lip began to tremble and from the corner of her eyes she looked at the king with the glances that seemed to burn him. (1:7:69:20) She lectures to the king in the open court demanding justice for her son, and scolds him for "lying like a commoner". She says, "Why do you slight me in your assembly as though I were a commoner? I am surely not baying in a desert -- why don't you

hear me? (1:7:68:30).... "My birth is higher than yours, Dushyanta:" (1:7:69:1) She is confidence incarnate. Even after her rejection she is sure of her son's future which is her prime concern. She tells Dushyanta:

> "There is no consorting with one like you. Even without you, Dushyanta, my son shall reign over four-cornered earth crowned by the king of mountains:" (1:7:69:29)

In Kalidasa, Shakuntala appears as an obedient daughter, beautiful, beloved, with bashfulness of a courtesan modeled after one from the court of the king Vikramaditya or the one in whose court the poet may have lived. She is a devoted wife and a loving mother. She is a modest shy, coy, and submissive woman lacking in confidence of her counterpart in the *Mahabharata* suggesting change for worse in the position and status of women in the age of Kalidasa. In the epic, Shakuntala is a confident, high-spirited, assertive young woman. However, in the play she is a submissive, shy and reserved subservient woman. Later she seems to be more in the awe than love for the king. She is not able to assert her rights and object to her illtreatment.

Ved Vyas's Shakuntala is a product of the society that subscribed to the spirit of matriarchal society. Kalidasa's Shakuntala on the other hand appears to be a product of patriarchal society in which women became subservient to men. The tradition enunciated by patriarchy naturally found Kalidasa's Shakuntala more convenient to itself than Ved Vyas's. The acceptance of this tradition signaled prospective decline in the status and position of women in Indian society.

Kalidasa leaves quite a few traces of evidences in the play regarding the position of women in the play. The imagery of the play reveals the subordinate position of the woman. The wife is referred to as a creeper and husband its supporting tree (Act 1:20 15-6). In the conversation between Ansuya and Priyamvada woman (wife) is compared to a creeper, the Vishakha star, and river, and man (husband) is a tree, the moon, and the sea. (Act 3: 11-18) Further, wife was not

supposed to go against her husband, though illtreated by him, says Kashyap in his piece of advice to Shakuntala. (Act IV, Shloka 18) Moreover, in the court of the king (Act V) when Dushyanta does not accept Shakuntala, Sharadvata leaves Shakuntala at Dushyanta's mercy:

"Tadesha bhavatah patni tyaj vaina gruhan va? Uppanna hi deresh prabhuta sarvatomukhi". (Here then is your wife. Abandon her or accept For husbands have all-extending authority over wives.) (Act V. Shloka 26)

Thereafter Sharadvata, Sharangrava forsake pregnant Shakuntala. Gautami, seeing Shakuntala weeping piteously and following them, says to Sharangrava, "What possibly can poor daughter do when her husband is harsh in repudiation?" Hearing this Sharangrava turns to her, and says angrily, *"Kimpurobhage swatantryamavalambse"*. (Wanton girl, do you resort to independence?) (Act V. 26,8). He further says,

"Yadi yatha vadati kshitipastatha.
Twamasi kim piturutkulya twya.
Ath tu vetsa shuchi vratmatmanah
Patikule tav dasyampi kshamas".
(Act V, Shloka 27)

(If you are as the king says, what has your father to do with who have transgressed the family? If, on the other hand, you know your own vow to be pure, even slavery in the family of your husband is sufficient for you).

This scene in a way comments on the subservient position of wife in comparison to her husband in the age of Kalidasa[4]. She was the husband's property to be mastered and abandoned, if convenient for him. And in such a situation even her own people would not shelter her. The husband's (man's) was the ultimate verdict. But the conduct of the Kanva's disciples is deplorably unworthy of them – worse than Dushyanta's, as they leave their poor Shakuntala quick with a child to her fate in a condition in which even an unknown woman should not be

left unattended. Dushyanta, the king and *grahastha* may be excused but not Sharangrava and Sharadvata, for these *sanyasins* were in a better position to defy the laws of the culture. Kalidasa misses an opportunity to express at least his dissatisfaction with the then inhuman treatment of women. It should however not be construed that the dramatist on his part either lionized or subscribed to such an inhuman treatment of woman in his age.

Moreover, the man-woman binary set informs us that polygamy, a barometer to measure the nature of women's position in a society because it indicates woman's economic and social dependence on man, was not uncommon in Kalidasa's days. Dushyanta has many wives in his palace breeding intrigues and rivalry among them to win the king's affections. Hanspadika cleverly censures the king through her song, for after enjoying her he has forgotten her, as his affections found a new resort in the new queen Vasumati. (Shloka 1, Act V) Dushyanta himself accepts that he had many wives (Shloka 19, Act III), and Kashyap's piece of advice to Shakuntala says, "Act the part of a dear friend to co-wives" (Shloka 18, Act IV) suggesting existence of polygamous practices where it was affordable. In the next Act, Kalidasa introduces a minor story of Dhanmmitra, with the purpose of ennobling the character of the king. "A leading merchant named Dhanmitra carrying on business by sea died in a ship disaster. And childless, they say, is a poor man His riches go to the king's treasure, is what has been written by the minister, The king comments on the report that since he had great riches, he must have had several wives. The king was told that one of his wives, the daughter of a merchant of Saket was soon to have a child. The king passed the judgement that the child would have inheritance right." (Act VI,22-34-42) it means that the unborn child was entitled to the father's property but not the living widow, suggesting subordinate position of women. Ideal it would have been if Kalidasa had provided some respectability to women by making his hero pass judgment in favour of the widow at least.

Kalidasa contemporized his characters and made them behave accordingly and in the process he could not rise above the prejudices of

the age against the women. His treatment of Shakuntala and of the women in general in the play is of the Manu or the post-Manu period. Manu did not recognize woman-heir. Yagyavalkya admitted her rights as he sought the opinion of his wives before taking a decision involving their lives, as in his case of going for *vanprashta.* Narada made provisions for her maintenance, and so did Brahapati. Manu lip serviced women in principle but treated them in different tongues in different places

Kalidasa depicted women in his play as he saw them around him. Though he does not express his dissatisfaction against their exploitation, poor and unequal treatment meted out to them in the course of the play, yet he provides a few small rents in the thick veil of the play through which we get an idea of their inequal state. For this it is necessary for us to consider Kalidasa's art of positioning of characters and construction of worlds within the play.

Kalidasa thinks in pairs. He conceives and constructs his play accordingly by comparing and contrasting different genders, classes, worlds and views. He pairs Dushyant and Shakuntala, two worlds within them, and compares them with another pairs from another world of Kanva(the loving hermit) and Gautami(motherly figure), further compared with the divine pair of Maricha and Aditi. Shakuntala is further compared with Hanspadika and Vasumati in the palace and in the hermitage her two companions of almost contrasting nature – Anusuya (grave and sensible) and Priymvada (playful and vivacious). These female pupils of Kanva are balanced by another set of male pupils Sharangrava (proud, fearless and haughty) and Sharadvata (reserved and calm). Dushyanta is given another companion in the form of Madhavya, his *vidushak* (jester).

Apart from these, the poet presents other prominent binary sets as nature and culture, *gramya* and *aranyak*, forest and city, palace and hermitage, and hunter and hunted. In the play the *gramya* and the *aranyak* represented the two poles of the settlement and wilderness, of order and disorder, of the known and the unknown. The play contrasts the two disorderly backgrounds — of the nature(forest) and the culture

(court). The forest knows no law or rule of the cultured court. The moods of nature- with teeth and claws red in blood on the one hand and other with lap over brimming with its bounties rule the forest without clear structures.

The plot-construction of the play presents this dichotomy quite clearly. The Acts I to IV depict the natural world. Even Dushyanta after seeing Shakuntala draws a demarcating line between the worlds-between garden-creepers and forest-creepers, between the beauties of his harem and the forest. The subsequent Acts unfold a different cultured world of the court marked with artificialness and crookedness- an altogether different world swarmed with men lapped in the flames of love, lust, moral obliquities and intrigues as opposed to the world of beautiful bounties of nature and living in harmony with them (Shloka 10 & 11,Act IV). In the last Act VII the dramatist again takes us away from the gross and stifling world of court and the capital to a divine world of bliss, different from Kanva's hermitage also. The consideration of the play on the lines of the binary oppositions of nature and culture becomes problematic because of Kanva's hermitage. The hermitage defies being clearly categorized in any of the two. It is closer to nature but not absolutely unconnected with the life of the city. It is related to the culture, city and court in the *sanyasa* is to *grahastha*. In a sense it mediates between the two as it is set in a natural environment where social behaviour is in accordance with the naturalness of nature. Further, there is the divine immortal world of heaven that stands above all three worlds- the nature, city (cultural) and hermitage (life in harmony with nature). The binary structures of nature and culture are suggested, spelt and scandalized simultaneously by Kalidasa in this play.

Lying otherwise separately, it is the hunt that connects binary oppositions-nature and culture together. Culture, a cooked product of nature(raw), attacks it progenitor in the play and in the epic. The description of the hunt in the epic is more graphic and detailed than in the play It is a war against nature (represented by the forest, animals, women, Shakuntala), led by Dushyanta representing culture, the court city, and man. Its catastrophic consequence is dirty dance of death, destruction and havoc, all around. The hunt known only two parties- hunter and hunted.

The hunting expedition led by Dushyanta, the master hunter, disturbed the atmosphere of the forest with its tumultuous noise and connects it to the world of female protagonist. Not being content with it the king "stalked about killing wild game and fowl with javelin, sword, mace, bludgeon, halberd". (1:63:10) "many families of tigers he laid low". (1:63:10) And a large number of deer was killed in the massive hunt. Kalidas also describes the hunting in the play. Dushyant is in fact 'addicted to the chase: informs the Vidushak. (Act II, 13) The Senapati also considers the hunting a vice and wants the Vidushak to persuade the king against hunting.

Notwithstanding this change in attitude towards nature, Dushyant's hunting expedition is in no way less calamitous. He comes to the forest as a hunter of animals only. But his deeper approach in the forest leads him to the hermitage of Kanva, adding a new dimension to his hunting The animals of the forest, and the inhabitants of the hermitage-animals and human beings-all are vulnerable to alien(hunting) ways of the city and its people represented by Dushyanta and his people. The city, its palace, its court, its culture and people leave their dark disturbing shadows on forest, hermitage and its inhabitants. Shakuntala (meaning bird, named so, for she was protected by birds when she was abandoned in the desolate wilderness by Menaka after her birth) symbolically represents scars of that onslaught of the city. Vaikhanas, a pupil of Kanva's hermitage; who prevents the deer being killed by Dushyant, says, "King this is a dear of the hermitage he should not be killed, should not be killed". (Act 1;9,7) He further says,

> *"Na Khalu na khalu benah sannipatyoayamasmani,/ Mruduni mrugsharire pushprasavagnih,? Kwak harinkaham jeevatam chatilolam, kwach nishitpatah vajrashrah sharaste. Tat Sadhukrutsandhanam pratisamhar sayakam, Atrtanay van shastram praharumnagsi".*

(Not indeed, not indeed, should this arrow be shot at the delicate body of a deer, like fire upon a heap of flowers! Where alas is the extremely frail life of poor deer, and where your arrows of sharp descent and adamantine strength? Therefore, withhold your arrow has been well aimed Your weapon is for the protection of the distressed, not

to strike at the innocent.) (Act I, Shloka 10-11).

This statement covers not only the deer but Shakuntala and all other innocent ones including such sections of societies. Ironically, in the play, the deer is spared but Shakuntala is not. The delicate innocent Shakuntala could not protect herself from sharp, shrewd and seductive ways of the man and city, although hers is not, however, a fully uncourted calamity. Here, Shakuntala, in a way, becomes a symbol of colonized society, if the play is to be perceived in the light of obtaining approaches and perceptions like post-colonialism.

Imperialism "means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism', which is always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlement on distant on territory". (Said: 1993:9) Further, implanting and colonialism are not merely acts of accumulation and acquisition. They are sustained by and gain impressive ideological formulations' including ideas that people of certain territories 'require and beseech' domination and also forms of knowledge allied to it. If we accept Edward Said' definition of imperialism and colonialism, the play then opens itself to colonized and colonized binary and its readings from that perspective. Dushaynta's hunting expedition is the city's invasion on nature and its societies for the sport of the former. Shakuntala's story contains in it the story of the city (the capital) trying to control and rule over the distant territories. There may not be a clear-cut instance of accumulation and acquisition in the play but it suggests that colonialism in its larger sense existed in one form or another in all societies before they took it upon themselves either to colonize or be colonized.

Colonialism entails in it loss of innocence on the parts of colonizer and colonized as well. Dushyanta had already lost his innocence, and his advent into the hermitage spells Shakuntala's loss of innocence. Though the opposition between nature, man and woman, and colonizer and colonized seems to have been in good measure diluted by Kalidasa, yet Shakuntala at a level becomes a symbol of colonized societies. Shakuntala is a colony and Dushyanta a colonizer.

Dushyanata exploits her, her innocence her resources and her world like a colonizer (He is referred to "bhoktar" or the enjoyer in the play.) (Act II, shloka 10) Her colonization, exploitation and then rejection are legitimized and sustained by diverse discourses of polygamy, social sanction or the supernatural, produced by culture. Colonization leads to *abulia*, lack of will, social prostration, loss of confidence and amnesia.

With the last point of amnesia the consideration of Shakuntala gets problematized. If the colonized society suffers from amnesia, then Shakuntala should. But it is Dushyanta who does. In the epic, the amnesia is a feigned one, and in the play it is caused by the curse Shakuntala escaped amnesia, for she is rooted in nature, her heritage, and values. Her roots help her in sustaining herself and her confidence with which she challenges and even rebukes the king in the epic. Her roots have become a little weaker by the time she re-appears in the play. In the play, she does not lose her memory but she fails to assert herself like her epical counterpart even in the face of her imminent rejection She says this only, *"Kathamanen kitven vipralabhadhasmi"*. (Act V.26,3) (How have I been deceived by this villain!).

Taking this point a little further it can be forwarded the societies like Indian that unfortunately suffered colonization could withstand the colonial ways and operations and sustain themselves, for they were rooted in their past heritage, values and culture. If Indian society survived colonization, it was because she did not lose memory.

The reconciliation between Dushyanta and Shakuntala is the post-colonial period not in its traditional but in a new positive sense in which the erstwhile colonizer and colonized societies forgive each other for the way they treated each other- an otherwise explosive realty which they think they are condemned to remember- and work together closely for the betterment of their worlds leading to new worlds for a new generation, not of reactionists, but of the Bharatas (*'Bha'* means light and *'rat'* means engaged) – of those engaged in the pursit of light.

III

Kalidasa has given different roles to women in his plays particularly in all the worlds constructed by him with his words. On the surface there seems to be conflict between the worlds of city and of the forest, as discussed earlier. The women in the palace, despite being queens live in a state of insecurity in terms of the attention of the king or for trying to earn the favour of the centre of power and be the head queen. Against this, there is no conflict among women in the hermitage. Shakuntala and her friends Anusuya and Priyamvada live for each other and the former is not an object of jealousy of the remaining. Kanva considers Shakuntala more trustworthy than his male students, and he has greater faith in her abilities. That is why he makes Shakuntala as in-charge of the hermitage when Kanva, the Kulpati, goes out. The only blemish on her part can be her love of Dushyanta and its consummation with him, and negligence of his duty as the host, as she failed to subscribe to *"atithi devo bhava",* according to which guest is god that later became the cause of Durvasa's curse. But love, whenever it springs, needs nobody's permission and knows no rule. And if it were to do so, it won't be love, for like flowers it does not rely on the consent of gardener and has no fear of scissors.

In the celestial world of Apsaras like Menaka, women are freer than in choice of their paths and lives. They know no rule of the human world. Better it would be to say that they have their own rules, though they come in touch with human world also. Shakuntala is a consequence of such a relationship between human and celestial world in the form of Vishwamitra and Menaka. Though Menaka abandoned Shakuntala to the care of birds, yet she behaved in a more responsible manner than the father Vishwamitra who like Dushyanta had forgotten his love and the child too. However, when Shakuntala is not recognized by Dushyanta and abandoned by her companions from the hermitage, Menaka descends from her celestial abode and takes her pregnant daughter in her shelter. The divine world of Marichi rishi and his wife Aditi is a world of resolution of all conflicts, as Dushyanta's son can count teeth of a cub without suppressing it. The incident shows the child's

fearlessness and willingness of the cub to be played with without the fear of war between nature and culture and his weapons. It is in this world that the crises — emotional and existential — of Shakuntala and Dushyanta's life is resolved.

Here I must return to the issue raised initially and state that limitations of methodology of social sciences should not persuade us not to study literary texts from this methodological perspective. In fact in the preceding decades, social scientists have interpreted literary texts in ways better than literary critics. In the world of literary study and interpretation, the Gresham's law, according to which bad currency drives good currency out of market, does not operate fortunately, and good 'responsible' interpretations, validated by literary evidences, last long. Responsibility also demands location of texts in time, space and cultural world - view that produced them, for texts do not come into existence in cultural vacuum. Kalidasa's women characters are products of civilizations forces which in his case was a pagan civilization like the Greek, Arab, Mayan or Incan civilization with the differences, that the first was primarily spiritual (dealing with *dharma* and *moksha* without ignoring *kama* and *artha,)* and allowed questioning from within leading to its branching out in the form of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism among others.

Kalidasa in his delineation of characters particularly women shared quintessential structure of pagan vision that strives for resolution of (cosmic) conflict that pagan civilization achieve better than their monotheistic counterparts. Indian (read Hindu) civilization resolved cosmic conflict in terms of seeing the Supreme Being Brahma into its three manifestations i.e. creation (Brahma), sustenance(Vishnu) and destruction (Shiva), their relatedness and interdependence and also in simultaneous existence of *nratya* (dance) and *mrutya* (death) i.e. celebration and sorrow in Shiva. In Kalidasa, the conflict between nature and culture, city and (village) forest, mortal and celestial world is resolved by frequent interaction and movement among different worlds. In this resolution, his women characters play their significant roles. Dushyanta's hunt is paralleled by Shakuntala's care for nature and its

manifestations like plants, creepers and fawns. Nature also recognizes it and empathizes with Shakuntala and her state from her birth to upbringing in the hermitage from his *gandharva* marriage to mothering his child in the sage Marichi's hermitage. In other words, a pagan civilization like Indian resolves conflicts by changing its perception, though conflict exists in nature in one form or the other. Kalidasa's achievement lies in showing this resolution in concrete from in which his women characters play their significant roles. It is his ability to resolve conflict that saves *Abhigyanshakuntalam* from becoming a tragedy. Nothing could have then been more tragic than the end of the play at a point, if Shakuntala were to commit suicide after not being recognized by Dushyanta. Kalidasa's achievement lies in his ability to create women characters but also in making them realize their full potential, as Shakuntala mothers not just a child but a nation at least symbolically, as the country Bharata comes to be known after her son Bharata.

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[1] In the "Lankakand" his *Ramacharitmanas,* Tulsidasa, a 17th century Hindi bhakti poet, speaks of differentiating intellect(*bhed-buddhi)* as something unwanted. At the end of the Lanka war, Lord Brahma after appreciating Rama for killing Ravana seeks Rama's grace in freeing him from differing intellect (*Bheda buddhi).*

[2] For historically hazy periods for which even *smriti* texts are not available, texts that fall in the category of literary discourse can be used for 'constructing', history with whatever information or material is available. There have been quite a few successful studies of this sort like Shakuntala Rao Shastri's *Women in the Vedic Age* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1952). The observations of Shakuntala Rao are worth noting: "The materials for a study of the life and position of women in the Rig Vedic age are very scanty; hence any observation is, in most cases, bound to be based more on indirect evidence like literary allusions, than on direct and systematic data. The procedure, therefore, that can be followed with best advantage is to survey the subject from the various points of view. from which conclusions may profitably be drawn. Such an inquiry would obviously be limited in scope. But considering the dearth of materials, such a limitation can not be avoided.

[3] In the classical Sanskrit typology *sruti* includes vedic literature and *smriti* are treatises of philosophy, science and polity. *Kavya* is the third kind.'which is valued for manner of expression not for *shabda* e.g. in the *mantra-s* nor *artha* e.g. in *itihasa purana.* In Panini it is *krt* that is a body of statements contingents on an individual for its validity.

[4] Let us here face the reality. We should not out of natural emotional attachment for everything ours try to glorify or justify everything in the past against the existing facts or details. For instance, there are some who claim that there were either no or just two women composers in the vedic period, as claim Tharu and Lalita in their *Women Writing in India* (edited). The fact is that there were twenty seven women seer poets, whose *mantras* are recorded in various *mandala-s* of the vedas, particularly in *Rigveda.* That does not mean that it can be inferred that the position of woman was better than men. Shakuntala Rao Shastri's remarks are worth noting here, "The position of a woman in society can be judged by the way in which birth of a child is received. Was she considered inauspicious? The hyms of Rig-Veda say nothing to that effect, but we find prayers for the birth of a son, though we do not come across any reference deprecating the birth of a daughter as in A.V. VI, 11. So it can be presumed that the position of a girl was not very low, though it can be said that she was regarded equal to a boy".

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Empowered Female Characters of Kalidasa
A Perennial Source of Inspiration

Prof. Amita Sharma

Mahakavi Kalidasa's female characters have attracted the attention of readers more than his male characters, because he has portrayed them as symbols of empowerment. A woman is empowered if she can face the world even in adverse circumstances boldly with patience, she is empowered if she can take her decisions confidently and has courage to bear its fruits whether sour or sweet; she is empowered if she has a loving nature through which she can establish healthy relationships which are built upon a foundation of trust, honour, peace, moral values and communication. All the women characters of Kalidasa like Parvati, Shakuntala, Sita, Sudakshina, Urvarshi, Priyamvada, Anasuya etc. have these qualities.

During the life span, one has to face different calamities. We can not avoid them but we can keep ourselves cool and try hard to achieve our goals.

In epic poetry *Kumarsambhava* Himalaya, after marrying Mena is blessed with a daughter Parvati. By her birth Himalaya's sanctity and splendour enriched like a lamp by its luminous flame-tip, like the highway of heaven with the birth of Ganga and like a learned man by his refined speech.

प्रभामहत्या शिखयेव दीपस्त्रिमार्गयेव त्रिदिवस्य मार्गः।
संस्कारवत्येव गिरा मनीषी तया स पूतश्च विभूषितश्च।।

(Kumar. 1/28)

When the teacher started preaching her, all the learning acquired by her in previous births appeared before her immediately.

तां.....स्थिरोपदेशामुप देशकाले प्रपेदिरे प्राक्तनजन्मविद्याः।।

(Kumar. 1/30)

Mental enlightenment and moral excellence are the fruits of learning as described by Kalidasa himself in *Raghuvansa.*

सुतौ लक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्नौ सुमित्रा सुषुवे यमौ।
सम्यगागमिता विद्या प्रबोधविनयाविव।। X.7।

Adorned by both these qualities, she achieved her goal. It was her earnest desire to marry Lord Siva which was very difficult to be fulfilled, specially when he reduced Cupid to ashes by a fiery glance of his third eye. Parvati changed her course of life and undertook the most rigorous kind of austerity in order to please a god who is impervious to beauty but accessible to spiritual tapas!

इयेष सा कर्त्तुमवन्ध्यरूपतां समाधिमास्थाय तपेमिरात्मनः।
अवाप्यते वा कथमन्यथा हयं तथाविधं प्रेम पतिश्च तादृशः।।

(Kumar V/ 2)

Though her mother dissuaded her to do so and asked her to marry another god

मनीविताः सन्ति गृहेषु देवतास्तपः क्व वत्से क्व च तावकं वपुः।

(V/ 5)

she was firm in her decision and nothing could prevent her from following the path of austerity which could lead her to her goal.

इति ध्रुवेच्द्दामनुशासती सुतां शशाक मेना न नियन्तुमधमात्।
क्व ईप्सितार्थस्थिरनिश्चयं मनः पयश्च निम्नाभिमुखं प्रतीप येत्।।

(V/ 4)

She follows the path of righteousness and through her polite behavior builds healthy relationship not only with her parents and friends but also with the guest who came disguised as brahmacharin to dissuade her from her morning penance.

The message is very clear even for the moderm generation i.e. (i) Recognise your strength and accentuate them. (ii) To live a miserable life can never be compared to a life full of happiness. So, before taking a decision in your life, think in positive and right direction. Then do what you love to do within the limits of righteousness. It opens the door to peace and contentment. (iii) Build healthy relationships. Without this you will feel unsteady and your life will be full of anxieties.

This message is conveyed by Kalidasa repeatedly through the depiction of lives of his female characters. Sita is another such example. At the time of exile of Rama, though she was not supposed to go with him, she preferred to accompany him because she did not want to live a miserable life in the palace in the absence of her beloved husband. After fourteen years of exile, Rama returned to Ayodhya. But soon after his

coronation ceremony, malicious tongues began to wag against his receiving Sita back into his home as she had stayed in Ravana's home after abduction by him during their stay in forest. In a fit of self-righteousness, Rama decided to exile his queen Sita. Though convinced at heart of her chastity, Rama placed duty above love and bade Lakshman to take Sita to Valmiki's hermitage and to tell her there about her abandonment. Though she was stunned to hear it, faced it courageously and sent to Rama a touching message. She says 'Though you have forsaken me callously without even a parting word of sympathy, as soon as I am delivered of the precious burden I carry in my womb. I shall practice asceticism with my eyes fixed on the Sun- God, so that I may have you only as my husband in the next birth without separation from you even for a moment.'

वाच्यस्त्वया यद्वचनात्स राजा क्ह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य।।
साऽहं तपः सूर्यनिविष्टदृष्टिरूधर्वं प्रसूतेश्चरितुं चतिष्ये।
भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेऽपि त्वमेव भर्त्ता न च विप्रयोगः।।

(Raghu. XIV/61, 66)

She did not forget her relationship with her mothers-in-law and sends message to them also even in those miserable moments :

श्वश्रूजनं सर्वमनुक्रमेण विज्ञापय प्रापित्मत्प्रमणामः।
प्रजानिषेकं मयि वर्तमानं सूनोरनुध्यायत चेतसेति।।

(Raghu. XIV/60)

On hearing her lament, when Valmiki came to her, she did not forget to bow in spite of her pathetic condition :

तमश्रु नेत्रावरणं प्रभृज्य सीता विलापाद् विरता ववन्दे।

(XIV/71)

Kalidasa's sympathy with Sita's unfortunate lot seems to overcome even his admiration for Rama which is apparent from the remarks made by sage Valmiki at this moment :

त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुप्रव त्ता सस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे।

(XIV/71)

It is clear that at the time when people of Ayodhya were criticizing Sita, there were hermits like Valmiki who gave their full support to Sita.

Through the delineation of character of Shakuntala, Kalidasa has

shown that even a casual forgetting of the ultimate end of marriage in craze of sensual love, leads one to disappointment or the worst of trials and tribulations and only a genuine repentance or austere penance can save them from their sorrows. Shakuntala is a guileless girl of the hermitage but rises to her full stature when she boldly repudiates the charge of a loose woman hurled against her by the king :

शकु. – अनार्य! आत्मनो हृदयानुमानेन प्रेक्षसे। क इदानीमन्यो धर्मकञ्चुकप्रवेशिनस्तृणच्छनाकूपोपमस्य तवानुकृतिं प्रतिपत्स्यते?

And closely argues with him to vindicate her secret marriage.

शकु. – पौरव! न युक्तं नाम ते तथा पुराऽऽश्रमपद स्वभावोत्तानहृदयमिमं जनं समयपूर्वं प्रतार्येदृशैरक्षरैः प्रत्याख्यातुम्।

(Abhijanana. V)

This shows how a self respecting woman would react even in the worst of situations, without loosing her courage or presence of mind. So, Kalidasa is very clear that a woman should be bold and should have faith in her own purity of character and should not be meek and submissive beyond a limit.

Pandita Kaushiki in *Malvikagnimitram* is also an outstanding character of Kalidasa. Through the delineation of Kaushiki, Kalidasa has shown, how a single woman, though widowed early and having lost her guardian brother also, did persevere and pursue her own strategy to a successful completion. She is highly educated in all the arts and sciences and finds her way into Queen Dharini's establishment and carves out for herself the place of an honoured counceller in Agnimitra's place. This is the high status which a woman could attain in the teeth of the worst situations.

Thus Kalidasa has so wisely and vividly woven his women characters that they have not lost their relevance even after so many centuries and can show us the path of righteousness in adverse situations.

II

Kalidasa's female characters inspired many later writers either to rewrite their lives or to further explore the untouched qualities of the characters depicted by Kalidasa. One such play is *'Premapasitah Sarangaravah'* originally written by Mr. K. Chandrashekhara in a

Dravidian language and translated in Sanskrit by shri V.H. Subrahamanya Shastri. The heroine of the play is Priyamvada. In '*Abhijanaja Sakuntalam*' Priyamvada was a loving friend of Shakuntala and was devoted heart and soul to Shakuntala. When quick tempered sage Durvasa pronounced a harsh curse upon Shakuntala, Priyamvada ran to meet him and implored forgiveness for her friend by falling at his feet.

Now when the disciples of Kanva returned and she came to know about the incident of Hastinapur, how did she, who was so much concerned about the welfare of Shakuntala, react? This play '*Premapashitah Sharangaravah* is all about it.. It is a lengthy dialogue between Sharngarava and Priyamvada when Priyamvada finds fault with Sharngarava for his heartlessness in leaving distraught Shakuntala behind in a state of utter helplessness. Sharngarava tries to meet her accusations with arguments which look feeble before those of her. As the conversation progresses he comes more and more under the spell of her superior intellect which has illumined his learning which has failed to awaken the soft feelings in him. Does the Shastra say that a woman discarded by her husband should also be discarded by her relatives? He gives his explanations but not even for a moment can he stand her arguments and ultimately asks for forgiveness. He is ready to do whatever she asks him to. Later on he expresses his soft feelings and proposes her to be his life companion. She accepts the proposal after a witty discussion on the condition that he should first bring peace to Shakuntala. He says with memory regained Dushyanta would certainly accept Shakuntala. Till then they would wait and engage themselves in austerities.

Shakuntala, heroine of *Abhijanana Sakuntalam* has also been a source of inspiration for later writers and they have depicted the story and character of Shakuntala following their own imagination. One such novel composed in prose style by Shri Krishna Kumar in Sanskrit language is '*Tapovanavasini*.' Author of this work has followed Kalidasa in delineation of the character of Shakuntala upto the point when Dushyanta after solemnizing Gandharva marriage and spending a night in nuptial bliss left Shakuntala on the plea of joining his soldiers who not finding him in his camp, would be looking for him. He promised her to come back after a few days to take her along with all fanfare and regal splendor. In later part of the novel Shakuntala appears to be more bold, confident and dutiful than her counterpart in '*Abhijnana Sakuntalam*' After a long

wait when Dushyanta did not turn up, she started pursuing her higher studies. In the meantime she delivered a son and decided to bring him up on her own and to teach him all the Sastras (disciplines of learning) and also to train him in Sastravidya (armaments)

सकलशास्त्राणामभ्यासे सर्वविद्यशास्त्राणाञ्च सञ्चालने क्षमो भवेदयं सर्वदमन इति तस्याः मनःकामना। मया स्वयमेवायं शिक्षणीयः। माता सर्वेषां गुरूणामपि गुरूरिति मनसि निश्चित्य सा प्रथमं स्वयं शास्त्राणरमभ्यासे शस्त्राणाञ्च सञ्चालने निहितबुद्धिव्यवसाया बभूव। क्रमशश्च सा स्वयमेव सर्वदमनस्य प्रथमशिक्षिका समजनि।

(Tapavana.P.91)

After thirteen years her foster father Kanva decided to send her to her husband's home along with her12 year old son. Though Kanva arranged valuable gifts for Dushyanta and Shakuntala while sending her, she did not accept them and expressed her desire to go to Hastinapur dressed as a female ascetic.

नाऽह्मेतौर्द्रव्यैरात्मनो तपुः प्रसाधयिष्यामि। तपोवनवासिनी बालारूपेणैवाहं तस्य सकलजगत्स्वाभिनश्चक्रवर्तिनो राजधनीं प्रवेक्ष्यामि।

(P, 122)

She along with her son, straight went to the court of Dushyanta and pleaded with him to accept her and her son but he rejected her plea and charged her with moral turpitude. After a prolonged argument when she failed to convince him, she told him that it was predicted by astrologers that her son would be a chakravartin king and she herself is capable to educate her son. At this moment she also showed her expertise in archery.

त्वां विनाऽप्ययं मत्तः समुचितां शिक्षमधिगम्य सप्तसात्रपरिवेष्टितां धरां पालत्रिन्यति।... प्रस्थानात् पूर्वं त्वया मे सामथर्यं शस्त्रविद्याचमत्कृतिश्चावश्यमेव साक्षात्करणीया। एवमुक्त्वा रोषेणावेगेन च शकुन्तला त्वरितत्रत्या सर्वदमन–स्कन्धाद् धनुरादाय, तूणीराच्चैकं निशिताग्रं नाराचं निष्कास्य।

Leaving the crownless king aghast, she darts out of the court, resolute and firm to groom her son to be chakravartin king. She did not return to her parental abode, in stead inspired by her mother Menaka she went to Maricha's Asrama.

Finally, she met Dushyanta at Marica's Asrama. She recognized him when he fell on on her feet, tears streaming down his eyes. He was

a changed man from bully of the court to a penitent husband and a gentle father. So were Shakuntala and Sarvadamana with no rancour in them.

There is one more novel written in English language by the name *Shakuntala*. The heroine of this novel is Shakuntala spirited imaginative and adventurous but is destined like her legendry namesake to suffer the sanskaras of abandonment. Born into a poor family, she is married off to a wealthy man and although they share a happy life, Shakuntala feels that there are people, thoughts and events in far off lands which she is yet to see and experience. If man can travel and seek, why is it unseemly and inappropriate for woman. When her husband brings home a mysterious handmaiden from his travel, she is shocked and is consumed with jealousy. While praying by the river Ganges, she meets a Greek traveller and runs away with him leaving her home. She wanders with him from place to place leaving all her societal bindings to lead a life of pleasure. But this carefree life style is not enough to satiate her restlessness and she wanders off in the holy city of Kashi The novel is written by Namita Gokhale. Shakuntala depicted by her is similar to her legendary counter part in respect of boldness, restlessness and curiosity to see the world. But Shakuntala of Kalidasa soon realizes that sensual love and worldly pleasures can not satisfy our inner restlessness. It is the penance or self-restrain only which can lead us to our goal. Ultimately Namita Gokhale's Shakuntala also realizes it but only at the end when her life is altogether shattered.

The third remarkable thing about the empowered women characters of Kalidasa is that they paved way to the anecdote related to his learned wife Vidyottama whose inspiration enabled him to touch the heights of literary excellence. It is a well established fact in literary world that we can catch glimpses of poet's life through the characters depicted by him in his works. It is very much true for Kalidasa also. Several such anecdotes related to Kalidasa have been recorded by Ballala in his 'Bhojaprabandha' under the supposition that Kalidasa was associated with the generous king Bhoja of Dhara.

Poets inspired by this anecdote have depicted the life of Kalidasa through their literary works such as 'Asti kascid vagarthiyam', by Dr.Krishna Kumar, 'Vidyottama-Natika' by Dr. Rajendra Mishra. 'Vidyottama' by Shri Vishnu Datta Tripathi, 'Vidyaottama-Kalidasiyam

by Shri Ramakishan Mishra. All these works are composed in Sanskrit language.

One more such very popular literary work is written by Mohan Rakesh in Hindi language. The play 'Asadha ka eka dina' tells the story of Kalidasa through the eyes of Mallika, his confidante and muse of his work like Rtusamhara. Mallika stands apart for her commitment to literature, poetry and nature. Mallika pursues Kalidasa to go to Ujjayini in the kings court so that he could get an opportunity to explore his genius. Kalidasa goes to Ujjayini and writes excellent pieces of ornate poetry and play. But behind all his poetic works, Mallika works as a source of inspiration. Kalidasa himself expresses it in this play

कालिदास – परन्तु मैं जानता हूँ मैने वहाँ रहकर कुछ नहीं लिखा है। जो कुछ लिखा है वह यहाँ के जीवन का ही संचय था। कुमारसम्भव की पृष्ठभूमि यह हिमालय है और तपस्विनी उमा तु हो। मेघदूत के यक्ष की पीड़ा मेरी पीड़ा है और विरह विमर्दिता यक्षिणी तुम हो। अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल में शकुन्तला के रूप में तुम्हीं मेरे सामने थीं। मैंने जब–जब लिखने का प्रयत्न किया तुम्हारे और अपने जीवन के इतिहास को फिर–फिर दोहराया। और जब उससे हटकर लिखना चाहा तो रचना प्राणवान नहीं हुई। रघुवंश में अज का विलाप मेरी ही वेदना की अभिव्यक्ति है।

– आषाढ़ का एक दिन, पृ. 102

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"Kalidasa's Women Characters as Role Models of Women's Empowerment

Dr. Sujata Tripathi

Kalidasa the poet laureate, the spirit of ancient Indian culture and the greatest heir of fame – is the brightest luminary in the a firmament of Indian Poetry. He presents the sacred and high ideas of Indian culture, revealing the universal truth for common goodwill. He moulds the life of people, guides them to the sacred ideals, pointing out the values of life in their correct proportion and perspective. He realizes the dignity and worth of human life and endeavours to present high and innocent ideals in order to promote the interest and welfare of humanity by providing eternal bliss. A great supporter of moral values, he never persues the path of dissipation.

Kalidasa's precious contributions to Sanskrit literature consist of two lyrics, two epics and three dramas and he is supreme in all these creations. *Ritusamhara* and *Meghaduta* are the two lyrics *Ritusamhara* sings the magnificent glory of all six Indian seasons whereas the *Meghduta* is a living picture of natural beauty, presenting a love romance of the newly married couple on the dream-land of fancy. The *Kumarasambhavam* unfolds the beauties of human love by elevating it to the divine plane. The *Raghuvansa* presents the ideals of perfect manhood and kingship. It sings the glory of spiritualised love and beauty of racial life. The ancient legend of Pururavas and Urvasi has been given a beautiful shape by the dramatist in the *Vikramorvasiya*. It is the first attempt of blending both human and superhuman elements. The *Malavikagnimitra* is a light comedy with masterly skill. The dramatist interweaves a beautiful love-story round a simple historical fact. The drama *Abhijynasakuntala* is the combination of earth and heaven. In each of his creations Kalidasa has achieved greater success in presenting the female characters. They are beautiful, clever, virtuous, amiable and self-sacrificing. They are faithful wives and affectionate mothers.

It is relevant to point out here that poetry is not mere emotion but an expression of imagination through the medium of refined and embellished language, with in the frame work of the social, cultural and intellectual conditions prevailing during the period of the author as also the characters portrayed. That is the reason why the women characters of Kalidasa are trustful, sincere and loving.The paper examines Kalidasa's women characters in their varied roles as mothers, daughters, wives and beloveds. Kalidasa's women are tender hearted but brave, patient and truthful. They serve as perfect role models for the present generation of women in all spheres of life.

The mother figures occupy a prime place in Kalidasa's plays and our poet looks upon mothers with respect and dignity. In his *Malvikagnimitram* Dhaarini represents the character of an ideal mother. Her motherly instincts are expressed in her prayer to the God for her son's victory. She felt proud to be mother of heroic son

भर्त्रासि वीरपत्नीनां लाघ्यानां स्थापिता धुरि।
वीरसूरिति शब्दोऽयं तनयात्त्वामुपस्थितः।।

(Mal. V. 16.)

In the *Kumarsambhava*, our poet presents Uma, the divine mother. She expresses her motherly affection. She takes the baby hurriedly form the struggling krttikas. She feels an insatiable bliss after attaining her son.

स्वमंकमारोप्य सुधानिधानमिवात्मनो नन्दनमिन्दुवक्त्रा।
तमेकमेषा जगदेकवीरं बभूव पूज्या धूरि पुत्रिणीनाम्।।

(Ku. XI.22)

In the deep joy she forgets even the passing of day and night.

''दिवानिषं नाविदतां कदाचित्''

(Ku. XI.49)

This depicts the dedication of mother towards child which is naturally inbuilt in a woman. Her motherly affection extends even towards plant and creepers, birds and beasts. She waters little shrubs without fatigue. They receive more affection from her than Kumara Karttkeya. She plays with the deer of her penance – grove. She nourishes them with great

affection as it were her own sons. She is endowed with all the attributes of a mother.

अतिन्द्रिता सा स्वयमेव व क्षकान्धटस्तनपस्त्रवणैर्व्यवर्धयत।
गुटोऽपिश्येषां प्रथमाप्तजन्मनां न पुत्रवात्सल्यमपोकरि यति।।
(Ku. V.14)

In the Mahabharata Shakuntala is the mother of a son who is destined as the sovereign of the earth. When repulsed by Dushyanta in the royal court, she accuses him. In fury she trifles with the dignity of her husband. She asserts that inspite of his denial, her son would become a sovereign lord. In the presence of courtiers, she demands rights on behalf of her son but Kalidasa's Shakuntala is different. She stands passively in the presence of her oblivious husband. She breaks her silence only at great provocation but this example is more than enough to certify that a woman feels naturally empowered when she asserts her motherhood for the sake of her child.

In the *Raghuvams* Sita displays the highest ideal of a mother. Exiled by her husband during her pregnancy, she keeps herself alive, only for the sake of her son in her womb.

किंवा तवात्यन्तवियोगमोधे कुर्यामुपेक्षां स्तजीवेतेऽस्मिन्।
स्याद्रक्षणीयं यदि मे न तेजस्त्वदीयमन्तर्गतमन्तरायः।।

Not only this, she went back to Goddess Earth only after leaving her sons Lav and Kusha in the custody of her husband Rama. So we can say that centuries before and even today a woman is endowed with all the attributes of mother. Kalidasa displays both brave and tender-hearted mothers.

Similarly Kalidasa portrays daughters who are mortal, divine and combination of both. Malavika, Uma and Shakuntala are the perfect pictures of ideal daughters. According to Kalidasa a daughter should be endowed with noble qualities, should be full of life, modest, tender-hearted and full of artistic temperament.

Kalidasa presents in Uma a divine daughter. Sati former wife of

Siva, incarnates herself as Uma in the family of Himalaya. She purifies her family with her birth

संस्कारवत्येक गिरा मनीषी तया स पूत च विभूषित च।

(Ku.I.28)

She pleases her parents with her sports. They have greater affection for their daughter than for their son. She enjoys in her childhood.

महीभ तः पुत्रवतोऽपि दृष्टिस्तास्मिन्न पत्ये न जगाम तृप्तिम्।

(K.U.I.29)

She is the sweetest creation of Brahma

सा निर्मिता विश्वसृजा प्रयत्नादेकस्यसौन्दर्यदिदृक्षयेव।।४९।।

(K.U.I.49)

In a short period she gets excellence in various learnings, as if they were acquired in her previous life.

स्थिरोपव्रेशामुपदेशकाले प्रपेदिरे प्राक्तनाक्तन्म विद्याः।।

(K.U.I.30)

Uma is the object of affection of her parents. Due to her pleasant behavior, she is the favorite of all.

संबन्धिभिन्नोऽपि गिरेः कुलस्य स्नेहस्तदेकायतनं जगाय।।VII.5।।

(K.U.VII-5)

She is courteous, generous kind and conscious. She pays great reverence to an unknown visitor in her penance grove. She is a bashful girl. She does not openly propose marriage with Siva. She conveys her feelings through her friends and suggests that her parents should be approached.

अथ विश्वात्मने गौरी संदिदश मिथः सखीम्।

दाता मे भूमृतां नाथः प्रताणीक्रियतामिति।।1 ।।

(K.U.VI-I)

After her marriage she retains her bashfulness, the ornament of the womanfolk.

नवपरिणयलज्जाभूषणां तत्र गौरीं।

वदनमपट्टरन्तीं तत्कृताक्षेपमीशः।।

(K.U.VII.95)

With her austerity practised in her young age, she purifies the

penance grove. Due to her great personality, the hostile beasts of the hermitage, give up enemity. Due to her fittest qualities, she is the right person to become the wife of Siva.

Kalidasa employs the power of his high imagination in fashioning Shakuntala. She in the "apara srsti" of the creator, the mental creation Brahma, furnished with the onass of beauties.

चित्रे निवेश्य परिकल्पितसत्त्वयोगा
रूपोच्चयेन मनसा विधिना कृता नु।
स्त्रीरत्नसृष्टिपरा प्रतिभाति सामे
धातुर्विभुत्वमनुचिन्त्य वपुश्च तस्या।।

(Saku.II.9)

She bears natural beauty. She is innocent like the unsmelt flower and unplucked blossom. Her youth is lovely as a flower.

अनाघ्रातं पुष्पं किसलयमलूंन............।

(Saku. II .10)

She passes her childhood in the hermitage with birds and beasts, plants and creepers. She has motherly affection for them. She waters the shrubs and feeds the animals. She is blessed with her two friends and enjoys the pleasures of their company. By her pleasing behavior, she makes the forest world her own. For her abilities, Kanva appoints her as his representative to receive the guests. She does not disclose her feeling even before her intimate friends. She keeps this shyness even in front of her lover. She has knowledge of nursing. She cures the fawn from the wound. Though the daughter of a hermit, She is a loving wife. Though she practices penance, she is nourished and grown up in the serenity of the penance grove. She is clever. Kalidasa presents Shakuntala as an accomplished, dutiful daughter, endowed with fine sensibilities.

Kalidasa conceives wives as perfect models of Indian womanhood. They have love and regard for their husbands.In the *Kumar Sambhavam* Uma is the divine wife of God Siva who follows him from one life to another. Amidst women, she is chosen by the Gods for the birth of heroic son who will rescue the universe from the terror of Tarka. She is the half body of Siva. After re birth as Uma, she practices

austerity to regain her husband. She curses her beauty which no longer attracts Siva. In her conception, beauty is fruitful when it allures the lord.

स्त्रीणां प्रियालोकफलो हि वेषः

(Ku.V. I, VII. 22)

She practices hard austerity and excels the sages in *tapas*.

तपः शरीरैः कठिनैरूपार्जितं।

तपस्विनां दूरमधञ्चकार सा।।

(Ku.V.V, 27)

She gives up even dry leaves as food and thus acquires the title *aparna*. K.U.V. 28

Eventually, she attains success. She succeeds in winning Siva by severe penance.

"तवास्मि दासः क्रीतस्तपोभिरिति।"

(Ku.V 86)

Thus Uma becomes the ideal of chaste womanhood – proves the power embedded in women. Austerity, determination, will power and spiritual quality make her the embodiment of empowerment.

In the *Abhijnana Sakuntala*. Kalidasa depicts Shakuntala, a hermit girl born of Menaka and Visvamitra, a glorious combination of earth and heaven. Sakuntala suffers the worst as a devoted wife. With endurance and fortitude, She leads the life of a bereaved wife. In adversity, she leaves her complacency and suffers in silence. She does not blame her husband, but her own ill fate. As the daughter of a hermit, she can bear hardship. She passes through the ordeal of grief. She realizes that youthful beauty cannot get her husband. With patience and grace, she suffers therefore. She wins back both, her husband and son in great pleasure, in the hermitage of Marica. We observe that she is depicted as changed in to an ideal woman, faithful wife and an affectionate mother.

In the *Raghuvamsa*, Sita is the ideal wife Kalidasa has created. As a faithful wife, she follows Rama not only in prosperity and also in adversity. She is ready to bear suffering with dignity and grace. At her rejection, she condemns the deeds of her former life but does not blame

her husband.

ममैव जन्मान्तरपातकानां विपाकविस्फूर्जथुर प्रसह्यः।।

(Ragh. XIV. 62)

She conveys her message through Lakshmana to King Rama and not to her husband Rama. As a subject, she appeals to king Rama for justice. Kalidasa does not present her as a weak and victimized woman –

भूयो यथामे जन्मारेऽपि त्वमेव भर्त्ता न च विप्रयोगः।।

(Rag XIV.66)

In her message, she reminds him of the ideal of a king and solicits him to extend his protective care to her as his subject.

न पस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनं यत्स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रणीतः।

निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहं तपस्विसामान्य मवेक्षणीया।।

(Ragu. XIV. 67)

But, yes when Sita had undergone the ordeal of fire and had proved her chastity even them Sita Tyaga occured. She put up that rejection for the sake of Rama and her child in the womb. But when again she was asked to prove her chastity she opted to get back to Goddess Earth. She was not ready to compromise her self-esteem. That was the ever lasting punishment to Rama.

Kalidasa has achieved great success in the presentation of female characters. They experience more troubles and undergo greater sufferings. They are alive to the tradition that love in for order and harmony. Thus, the poet remains faithful in the presentation of womanhood in all its aspects.

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